

COABE AI SUMMIT

Expanding Impact with AI in Adult Education

Using AI to extend learner, educator, and program capacity

Victoria Lansdown

Pearson | Google | North Star AI Enablement

Instruction

Learner Practice

Workforce

Administration

Funding



ABOUT ME / WHY I'M HERE

Victoria Lansdown, MBA

My work sits between **education and industry**, so I'm looking at both what programs need now and what learners are being prepared for next.

COABE AI Summit

AI Program Manager + Instructional Designer

Google, through Synergis

Founder, North Star AI Enablement

Supporting education and industry organizations with AI adoption, training, workflows, policy, and implementation

ADDITIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- Pearson Higher Education AI Strategic Council
- Contributor to UNESCO's AI Competency Frameworks for teachers and students
- Background in K-12 education, adult learning, workforce development, and EdTech
- Work spanning higher education, adult education, nonprofits, and industry

Where capacity is limited, focus on one use case



Learners

- Limited time in class
- Need for repeated practice
- Different starting points
- Career and transition goals



Educators

- Differentiation
- Feedback
- Preparation
- Individual learner support



Programs

- Small teams
- Reporting and communications
- Workforce partnerships
- Funding and planning

Where could AI **expand capacity** without adding unnecessary work?

USE CASES

Six different uses of AI in adult education

INSTRUCTION

Adapt an existing lesson for multiple proficiency levels

LEARNER PRACTICE

Simulate workplace conversations between classes

WORKFORCE READINESS

Practice evaluating and revising AI-generated work

ADMINISTRATION

Organize learner or stakeholder feedback

FUNDING

Screen public opportunities against program criteria

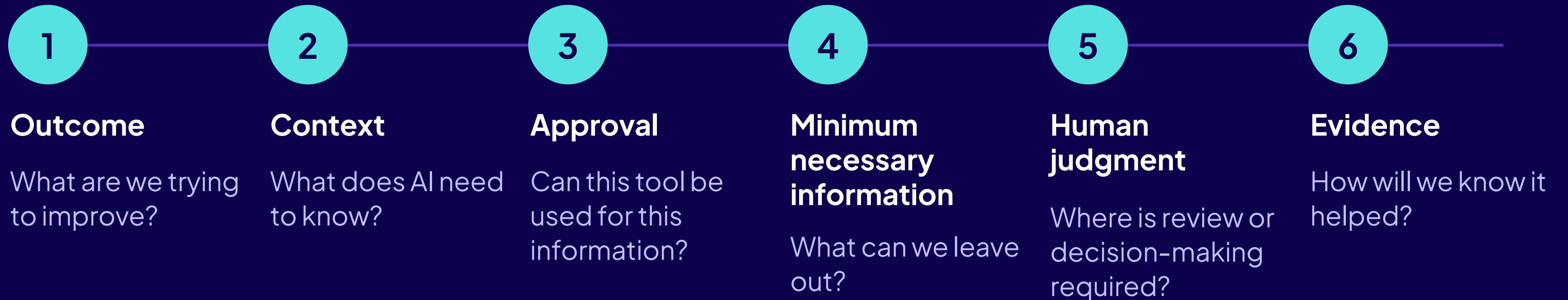
COMMUNICATION & PLANNING

Draft from existing notes, policies, or approved information

Each use requires **different information, risk controls, and measures of success.**

FRAMEWORK

A practical decision framework



The questions **stay consistent** even when the use case changes.

Define the improvement first

What outcome are we trying to improve?

CURRENT CONSTRAINT		POSSIBLE OUTCOME
Limited speaking time	→	More realistic English practice
Repetitive lesson adaptation	→	Faster differentiation
Large volume of learner feedback	→	Faster identification of recurring needs
Limited individual feedback	→	More opportunities for targeted support
Changing workplace expectations	→	Stronger AI judgment and verification skills

Be specific enough that you could eventually **measure the change.**

Same technology, different instructional purpose

Instructor-facing use

Existing lesson → AI-supported adaptation → Instructor review

Workplace communication lesson adapted for:

- lower English proficiency
- additional vocabulary support
- shorter reading load
- sentence stems

Learner-facing use

Course instruction → Additional AI practice → Return to instruction

Practice:

- explaining a scheduling issue
- responding to a customer
- preparing for an interview

The role of AI changes **depending on the outcome.**

QUESTION 1 · OUTCOME

What would meaningful impact look like?

Would we know if this use actually helped?

PACE AI: ADULT ENGLISH LEARNERS IN IET

~6%

improvement in vocabulary and comprehension

3 in 4

Nearly 3 in 4 learners reported that the tool helped improve their English.

POSSIBLE EVIDENCE

- Skill improvement
- Additional practice
- Learner experience
- Performance over time

Give AI the context that changes the answer

What information does the AI need to do this well?

Purpose

- Goal
- Intended outcome

Audience

- Learner level
- Role or population
- Prior knowledge

Source

- Existing lesson
- Rubric
- Program information
- Approved reference material

Boundaries

- Length
- Format
- Vocabulary
- What to preserve
- What to avoid

Useful context reduces the number of decisions the model has to guess.

Example: why prompts like “create a lesson” create rework

PROMPT A

“Create a workplace communication lesson.”

AI must guess:

- learner level
- objective
- workplace setting
- vocabulary
- duration
- assessment

PROMPT B

Adapt this existing lesson

- **Objective:** Explain a scheduling issue to a supervisor
- **Level:** Intermediate adult English learner
- **Preserve:** 8 target vocabulary words
- **Length:** 20 minutes
- **Add:** Sentence stems + paired role-play
- Keep the same learning objective

The second request **narrows the instructional decisions** AI is allowed to make.

One recurring task in your role

Examples

- Adapt a lesson
- Prepare learner communication
- Analyze survey comments
- Create practice questions
- Screen funding opportunities
- Prepare a program update

QUESTION	YOUR TASK
What is the goal?	
Who is it for?	
What source should AI use?	
What defines a good result?	
What constraints apply?	
What information can be left out?	

The same framework applied to learner feedback

Use case: reviewing learner survey comments

AI MAY NEED

- Survey purpose
- Questions learners answered
- Themes the team wants to identify
- Desired output format
- Whether direct quotes are needed
- The decision staff are preparing to make

POTENTIAL OUTPUT

- Recurring themes
- Differences across questions
- Issues requiring follow-up
- Representative de-identified quotes

HUMAN ROLE

Interpret what the patterns mean for the program

Before we use learner or internal information

Is this tool approved for this information and this use?

Tool

☐ Institutionally approved?

☐ Approved for this purpose?

Information

☐ PII?

☐ Education records?

☐ Staff or internal data?

Provider

☐ Storage?

☐ Retention?

☐ Model training?

☐ Access?

Policy

☒ What additional organizational rules apply?

The information changes the risk

LOWER SENSITIVITY

Public information

- Job postings
- Public workforce data
- Published research
- Public program descriptions
- Public funding announcements

REQUIRES INSTITUTIONAL GUIDANCE

Internal information

- Internal reports
- Staff information
- Unpublished program data

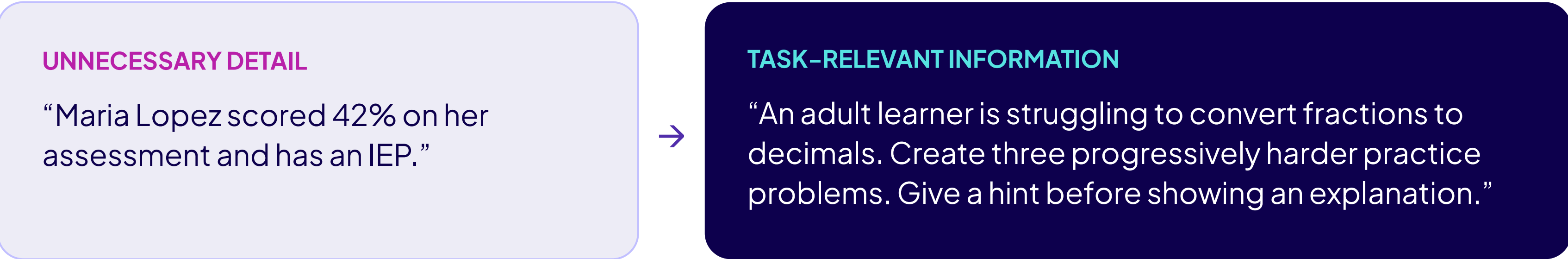
HIGHER SENSITIVITY

Learner information

- Assessments
- Education records
- Personally identifiable information

The same AI task can become very different **when the information changes.**

More useful context does not require more personal data



RETAINED

skill gap

instructional need

REMOVED

name

score

disability information

AI literacy as a workplace privacy skill

“Can I use AI for this task, and what information am I allowed to give it?”

LEARNERS CAN PRACTICE ASKING

- Does my employer allow this tool?
- What information does it actually need?
- What should I remove?
- Could fictional data work?
- What could happen if this became visible to someone else?

EXAMPLES OF FICTIONAL PRACTICE

- customer request
- patient scenario
- workplace email
- schedule
- project brief
- employee communication

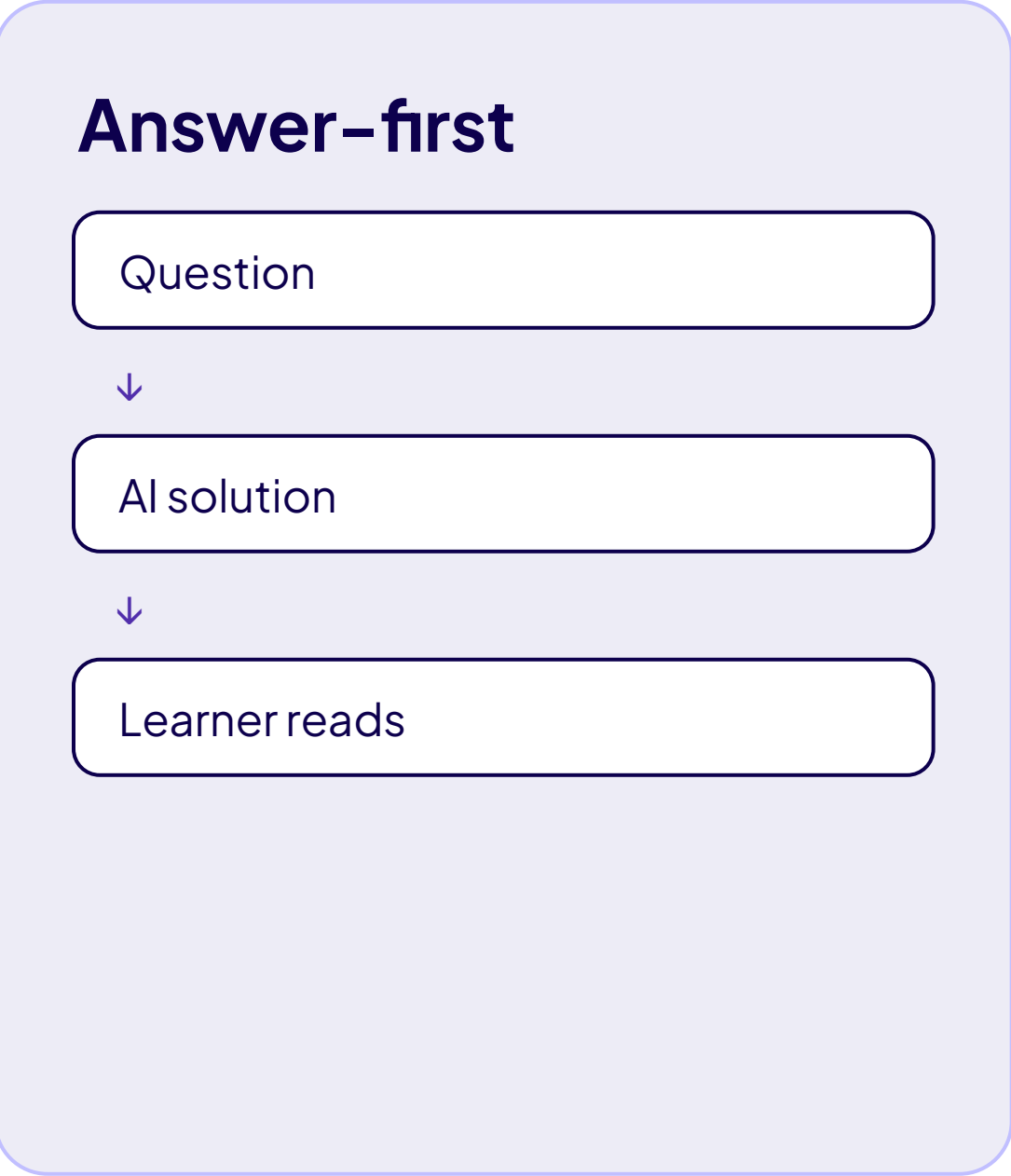
Decide what AI prepares and what people decide

	INPUT	AI PREPARES	HUMAN REVIEWS	DECISION
Differentiated lesson	Existing lesson	Adapts reading level + practice	Instructor reviews accuracy, level, and pedagogy	Instructor decides what learners receive
Program feedback	Survey comments	Groups themes + prepares summary	Staff review patterns and source material	Team decides what to change

Human review should sit where context and consequences are highest.

Learner support can preserve the work of learning

Two possible tutoring patterns



2025 STUDY

17%

Unrestricted GPT-4 group later scored 17% lower than the control group when AI was removed. A hint-based version did not show the same decline.

Administrative capacity: finding funding opportunities

STEP 1

Program defines fit

- Population served
- Geography
- Priorities
- Funding need
- Useful funding threshold
- Existing partnerships
- Requirements the program cannot meet



STEP 2

AI extracts from public opportunities

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| • Eligibility | • Geography |
| • Amount | • Required partnerships |
| • Deadline | • Allowable expenses |
| • Target population | • Match requirements |



STEP 3

Staff review original opportunity

Decision remains with the program

Decide what success looks like before scaling

USE	POSSIBLE MEASURES
Lesson adaptation	Prep time, correction required, instructional quality
Learner practice	Practice volume, skill gain, transfer, confidence
Feedback analysis	Turnaround time, themes identified, action taken
Funding search	Relevant opportunities found, staff screening time
Workforce AI practice	Accuracy, verification, responsible data use

Different use cases need different evidence.

QUESTION 6 · EVIDENCE

Time saved is only part of the story

~30% →

What happened with the capacity?

reduction in teacher preparation time

~35%

more individual teacher-student conversations

~30%

more student writing

Measure the downstream educational effect of saved time.

Sources: Education Endowment Foundation and NFER, "ChatGPT in Lesson Preparation: A Teacher Choices Trial" (2024). Randomized trial, 259 teachers, 68 English secondary schools; planning time fell about 31%.

Learner outcomes: measure with and without AI

With AI

- Quality of work
- Amount of practice
- Confidence
- Persistence
- Ability to evaluate AI output

Without AI

- Recall
- Underlying skill
- Independent problem-solving
- Transfer to a new context

The assessment should **match the capability** you want to understand.

What workplace AI readiness could actually look like

A learner receives an AI-supported workplace task. Can they...

1 Decide whether AI is appropriate?

2 Identify what information is safe to provide?

3 Give the system enough context?

4 Recognize inaccurate or weak output?

5 Verify the final result?

6 Explain what required their own judgment?

EXAMPLE Draft a response to a fictional customer whose appointment was rescheduled.

One possible assessment: AI workplace portfolio

LEARNER DOCUMENTS

- 1 The workplace task
- 2 Their approach
- 3 Where AI was used
- 4 AI output they changed or rejected
- 5 How the final result was verified
- 6 Information deliberately withheld
- 7 What required their own judgment

Shows process, occupational knowledge, AI skill, and judgment together.



After a pilot: continue, revise, or stop

Use a decision table

Continue	Revise	Stop
• Intended outcome improved • Staff effort is reasonable • Risks are manageable • Process can be repeated	• Some value • Too much correction • Context or workflow needs improvement • Review point is unclear	• Little meaningful improvement • New work exceeds benefit • Risks outweigh value • Simpler option exists

Testing something **does not create an obligation** to keep it.

CLOSING FRAMEWORK

Before using AI for a task, ask:

01

Outcome

What are we trying to improve?

02

Context

What does AI actually need to know?

03

Approval

Can we use this system for this information?

04

Minimum information

What can we leave out?

05

Judgment

Where does professional or learner judgment remain?

06

Evidence

What would tell us this was worth continuing?

Use the questions **before choosing the workflow**, and again **after testing it**.

A useful AI process should answer four things clearly

1

What improves?

Learner, educator, or
program outcome

2

What information is necessary?

Enough context, without
unnecessary exposure

3

Who remains responsible?

Clear review and decision
points

4

What evidence justifies continuing?

Impact that is meaningful
relative to effort and risk

Adult education programs can start with **one bounded use case** , learn from it, and expand where the results support it.

Q&A · 10 MINUTES

Thank you.

Bring a use case from your own program and we can work through the six questions together.

Victoria Lansdown

[linkedin.com/in/victoria-lansdown](https://www.linkedin.com/in/victoria-lansdown)