e: PlanRVA@PlanRVA.org
p: 804.323.2033
w: www.PlanRVA.org

PlanRVA

Artificial Intelligence Use Policy

Adopted: November 2026 | Version 1.0 | Richmond Regional Planning District Commission

1. Purpose

PlanRVA is committed to using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in a manner that serves the public interest, upholds the trust of our member localities, funders, and partners, and advances desired regional outcomes. At PlanRVA, AI tools are intended to support the expertise of skilled employees, enhancing capacity and productivity without taking the place of professional expertise or relationship-building. PlanRVA staff should use AI tools with the same professional discernment and ethical conduct they apply in all areas of agency business. This policy establishes expectations for how PlanRVA staff may use AI tools in carrying out their work, and how those tools will be governed, monitored, and evaluated over time.

This policy applies to all PlanRVA employees, Commission members, contractors, and consultants who use or develop AI tools on behalf of the organization.

2. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools are software applications that use machine learning, natural language processing, or similar technologies to generate text, images, data analysis, or other outputs. Examples include AI writing assistants, chatbots, image generators, and automated data analysis platforms.
- Generative AI is a subset of AI tools capable of producing original text, images, code, automation, or other content in response to user prompts.
- Sensitive or Confidential Information includes any data protected by law, contract, or organizational policy, including personally identifiable information (PII), non-public government data, legal communications, and pre-decisional planning documents. Levels of sensitivity and risk are defined further in PlanRVA's AI Governance Procedures document.

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3. Guiding Principles

PlanRVA's use of AI tools will be guided by the following principles:

- Public Trust First: AI tool and Generative AI usage must support, not undermine, the public's confidence in regional planning processes. Staff judgment and accountability remain primary.
- Human Oversight and Accountability: AI-generated content or analysis must be reviewed, verified, and approved by a qualified staff member before use in any official capacity.
- Transparency: PlanRVA will be transparent with member localities, the public, and regional partners about how AI tools are being used in the organization's work.
- Equity: AI tools must not be used in ways that introduce, amplify, or obscure bias in planning decisions, data analysis, or community engagement. AI use must uphold and promote human rights.
- Data Protection: No sensitive, confidential, or non-public information may be entered into unapproved AI systems or systems that store or use inputs for model training.

4. Permitted Uses

Staff may use approved AI tools and generative AI for the following purposes, which are non-exhaustive:

4.1 Drafting and Editing

- Drafting internal communications, reports, presentations, and grant narratives for subsequent staff review and revision.
- Summarizing meeting notes or background research materials.
- Proofreading and copy-editing existing documents.

4.2 Research and Analysis

- Conducting preliminary research on topics relevant to PlanRVA programs and projects.
- Synthesizing publicly available information to support planning work.
- Generating initial data visualizations or analysis frameworks for staff review.

4.3 Public Engagement Support

- Drafting public-facing communications such as newsletters, social media content, and meeting summaries.

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- Developing plain-language summaries of planning documents for the general public.
- Brainstorming engagement approaches or outreach strategies.

4.4 Administrative Efficiency

- Generating templates, checklists, and workflow documentation.
- Assisting with scheduling, agenda preparation, and meeting logistics.
- Synthesizing agency materials to ensure alignment between plans, communications, and timelines.
- Automation of specific internal operating practices to achieve greater efficiency in workflow and production.

5. Prohibited Uses

The following uses of AI tools and generative AI are prohibited:

- Entering personally identifiable information, non-public government data, legal communications, or any information designated as confidential into any AI system.
- Publishing AI-generated content without staff review, editing, and approval.
- Using AI tools to make or automate decisions that affect individual rights, benefits, or services.
- Using AI tools to misrepresent the authorship or origin of any document or communication.
- Using AI systems not approved by PlanRVA's executive leadership for work-related tasks involving organizational data.
- Using AI tools in ways that violate applicable federal, state, or local laws, including those governing data privacy and public records.

6. Artificial Intelligence-Generated or AI-Edited Images

AI-generated or AI-edited images may be used only with approval from the project lead or staff supervisor.

Before using AI-generated or AI-edited images, staff must consider:

- Whether the image could mislead the public.
- Whether the image resembles a real person without consent.
- Whether the tool's terms allow public-sector and public-facing use.
- Whether the image includes protected trademarks, copyrighted styles, logos, or recognizable private property.
- Whether disclosure is appropriate or required.

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AI-generated images should not be used to depict real events, public meetings, official actions, emergencies, infrastructure conditions, maps and data graphics, or community members unless clearly labeled and approved.

7. Data and Privacy

Staff must exercise heightened caution when working with data in conjunction with AI tools and generative AI. Specifically:

- All inputs must be evaluated before submission to determine whether they contain sensitive or confidential information.
- When in doubt about whether information is appropriate to share with an AI system, staff should consult their supervisor or PlanRVA's designated AI Policy point of contact before proceeding.
- Staff should review the data retention and privacy policies of any AI tool before use. Preferred tools will not use user inputs for model training by default.
- AI outputs that include data citations or statistics must be verified against original sources before inclusion in any official document or public communication.
- AI tools should be used with the awareness that material in PlanRVA systems is subject to FOIA.

8. Accountability and Oversight

PlanRVA will maintain clear lines of accountability for AI tool and generative AI use:

- Staff supervisors are responsible for ensuring their staff understand and comply with this policy.
- Staff are encouraged to report uncertainty about appropriate AI use to their supervisor without risk of penalty.
- PlanRVA's Executive Director, or AI Policy Coordinator, will serve as the organizational point of contact for AI policy questions and concerns.
- This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as AI tools, legal requirements, and organizational practices evolve.

9. Approved Tools

PlanRVA will maintain an internal list of approved AI tools that have been evaluated for data security, privacy, and alignment with this policy. Any AI tool approved for agency data should be held under an organization contract with defined retention practices rather than a personal subscription reimbursed on an expense report. Staff

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may only use tools on the approved list for work-related AI tasks unless an exception has been granted in writing by the Executive Director.

While staff are empowered to research and explore additional AI tools to identify new tools that would enhance their work and support PlanRVA's mission and key imperatives, everyone must avoid putting agency information into them. The process for tool nomination will be detailed in the PlanRVA AI Governance Procedures document.

10. Transparency with the Public

PlanRVA is committed to honesty with the communities we serve. When AI tools have materially contributed to the development of a public document, report, photograph, or communication:

- PlanRVA will note AI assistance in a document footnote, acknowledgments section, or cover communication, consistent with the level of AI contribution.
- PlanRVA will not imply that AI-generated analysis represents independent expert judgment unless it has been reviewed and validated by qualified staff.
- PlanRVA will not use AI-generated imagery or synthetic voices in public engagement without disclosure.

11. Training and Capacity Building

PlanRVA recognizes that responsible AI use requires ongoing learning. The organization commits to:

- Providing basic AI literacy orientation for all staff.
- Offering periodic training on responsible and effective AI tool use as part of professional development.
- Sharing lessons learned internally as the organization's experience with AI tools grows.

12. Policy Review and Amendment

Given the pace of change in AI technology and the evolving legal landscape, PlanRVA will review this policy regularly with a target of no less than annually. Staff feedback on policy effectiveness will be actively solicited during the review process. Substantive amendments will be brought to PlanRVA leadership for approval before taking effect.