## The Solution

## Why it matters

Identifying the right and most appropriate solution from the start can save a lot of wasted effort.

In the New Zealand public service, AI systems may:

* Deliver better outcomes for people and communities.
* Improve service quality, efficiency, and accessibility.
* Support innovation,productivity and economic growth.
* Maintain public trust through responsible design and deployment.

AI should support and augment human decision-making, not automatically replace it. It should help the public service to be smarter, faster, and more adaptive, without compromising fairness, transparency, or accountability.

A strong solution shows you have thought carefully about:

* Whether AI is genuinely needed.
* What type of AI system is appropriate.
* Which approach may be best: use, adapt or build.
* How it will interact with people, processes, and existing technology.

## How to frame the Solution

When preparing the Solution section, your team may consider the following:

* Explain why AI is needed: Clarify why traditional improvements (such as better forms, staffing, or manual processes) would not fully solve the problem. AI should be proposed only when it clearly adds value.
* Describe the type of AI system: Be specific.
* What approach do you propose taking?
  + Use: Using an existing AI system with minimal change
  + Adapt: Customise an existing system to suit your needs
  + Build: Develop a new system from the ground up
* Outline how the solution improves public value: The AI system should create clear benefits, faster services, more accurate decisions, fairer outcomes, or better use of public resources.
* Be realistic about scale and readiness: it is often a good idea to start with a pilot, prototype or controlled release. Public service innovation works best when it is phased, careful, and based on learning.

## Example of a Strong Solution

**Solution**: Adapt an existing AI system that leverages Natural Language Processing to support frontline caseworkers at Fictitious Agency by automatically summarising hardship grant applications.

Why AI is appropriate:

* Manual summarisation creates delays and inconsistencies.
* AI can reduce processing time by around 40% while increasing consistency.
* The system does not make final decisions, it assists caseworkers by highlighting key factors for human review.

Human Oversight:

* Staff have the ability to amend, reject, or override AI summaries.
* Every action is auditable to ensure transparency and accountability.

**Public Value**: Faster processing of grants improves access for vulnerable groups and strengthens public trust in welfare services.

## Example of a Poor Solution

**Solution:** Build a fully automated system to approve or deny hardship grants without human involvement.

Why this is poor:

* Removes human judgment from critical, high-impact decisions.
* Risks embedding bias or unfairness.
* Breaches expectations around explainability, fairness, and accountability.

**Common Traps**

* Assuming AI must automate everything: Many good public service AI systems assist humans, not replace them.
* Overcomplicating the solution: Focus on solving the specific problem you framed. Avoid building grand systems that try to solve multiple unrelated issues.
* Ignoring practical realities: Think back to use, adapt, build choices and tradeoffs.

## Summary Checklist

1. Question: Why is AI needed for this problem?

Purpose: Shows thoughtful solution design

1. Question: What type of AI will you use?

Purpose: Focuses technical choices

1. Question: Will you use, adopt or build a solution?

Purpose: Focuses on implementation choices

1. Question: How does it create public value?

Purpose: Grounds the solution in service outcomes

1. Question: How will it be tested and scaled safely?

Purpose: Aligns with phased, responsible innovation