

People, Policy, and Purpose: Building a Path for AI in Local Government

How Hardee County is building a foundation for responsible AI through policy, collaboration, human oversight, cybersecurity, governance, staff training, and practical departmental use cases.

Hardee County BOCC

Doug Baber — Assistant County Manager

Kyle Gilliard — IT Manager

Bobby Keene — Capital Projects Manager

Jamie Roelle — Facilities Manager

Castle AI Consulting

Christopher van der Kaay

Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA)

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Why AI Became a Leadership Priority

The background of the slide features a dark blue, monochromatic photograph of a modern, multi-story building at night. The building has large windows and a prominent entrance. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a glowing, stylized circuit board pattern with lines and dots, suggesting a technological or digital theme. The overall aesthetic is professional and tech-oriented.

- AI did not begin as a formal project.

- It emerged through leadership and staff curiosity about how it might support daily work.

- The conversation quickly shifted from what AI can do to where it should be used, where it should not be used, and how it should be approached responsibly.

- That made AI a leadership priority, requiring judgment, direction, and thoughtful oversight.**

Leadership faced a choice

Ignore it

Ban it

Or we guide it responsibly



The real risk was not “AI”. It was unmanaged AI.

Early on, Hardee County leadership agreed this needed structure, not a reaction.

That led to the creation of an
AI strategy roadmap to sequence decisions.



Hardee County AI Strategy Roadmap

Key Areas of Focus for Governance and Implementation

1



Policy and Governance Review

- Assess current IT acceptable use policies and gaps
- Update policies to address AI use, governance, and staff guidelines

2



Secure and Centralize AI Access

- Recommend deployment of private/secure AI workspace
- Shift GenAI use to a secure, county-managed environment

3



Pilot Design and Use Case Selection

- Identify departments for initial GenAI pilot
- Prioritize workflows with high ROI or repetitive tasks

4



Staff Training and Adoption

- Develop role-specific training (prompting, ethical use, and data handling)
- Introduce custom AI assistants

5



Broaden Adoption and Share County Successes

- Use pilot insights to inform countywide implementation
- Identify standout practices to showcase at peer and state-level forums

People

Leadership, staff, and shared
ownership behind responsible
AI adoption



Pillars for Responsible AI Adoption

LEADERSHIP, STAFF, AND SHARED OWNERSHIP



Cross-Department Collaboration

Shared responsibility across functions, not a siloed effort.



Human Oversight

People remain accountable for judgment, review, and decisions.



Broad Staff Understanding

AI awareness should extend beyond IT and into daily operations.



Training for Risk Reduction

Build practical understanding, safe use, and informed adoption.



Institutional Knowledge Retention

Keep important know-how accessible even when employees leave.

Compliance or Competence?

A key question shaped Hardee County's approach to responsible AI adoption.



Compliance

- Set boundaries
- Reduce risk
- Define acceptable use

vs.



Competence

- Build understanding
- Strengthen judgment
- Support responsible use in daily work

The goal was not compliance alone. It was competence with guardrails.

“

Hardee County focused on helping staff use AI well, not just controlling its use.

Hardee County established a cross-department AI Steering Committee

A practical structure for coordination, oversight, and shared decision-making.

COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS



Knowledge sharing



Pilot oversight



Risk identification



Translation across leadership,
IT, and departments



The Charter Formalized the Work

Key components of the approved charter



1. Purpose and Authority

Guidance, oversight, and accountability for responsible AI adoption.



2. Scope and Responsibilities

Review use cases, recommend policy, and assess privacy, accountability, and cybersecurity risks.



3. Core Objectives

Support responsible pilots, build policy foundations, strengthen staff capacity, and plan for future expansion.



4. Membership and Governance

Cross-department membership with Chair and Co-Chair leadership roles.



5. Meetings and Decisions

At least monthly, with quorum, consensus-first decision-making, and documented notes.



6. Reporting and Accountability

Track AI activities, training, and recommendations, with periodic and annual reporting.



“

AI use should be responsible, ethical, transparent, and aligned with County values and applicable law.

AI Leadership Team

An early shared structure for exploring, guiding, and scaling responsible AI use.



Why this structure mattered



Members came from multiple departments and functional areas



Shared accountability



Distributed ownership



Prevented AI from becoming 'someone else's problem,' not just an IT issue

Policy

Establishing clear guidelines and governance to ensure responsible, secure, and effective use of AI.



Comprehensive Policy Review and Development

Responsible AI adoption required both updating existing policies and creating new governance documents.

Updated Existing Policies & Procedures



Acceptable
Use Policy



Incident
Response Team



Cybersecurity
Glossary



Incident
Reporting Policy



Incident
Response Plan



Incident
Response Form



Malware
Playbook



Phishing
Playbook



Physical Security
Playbook

New Policies Created



AI
Policy



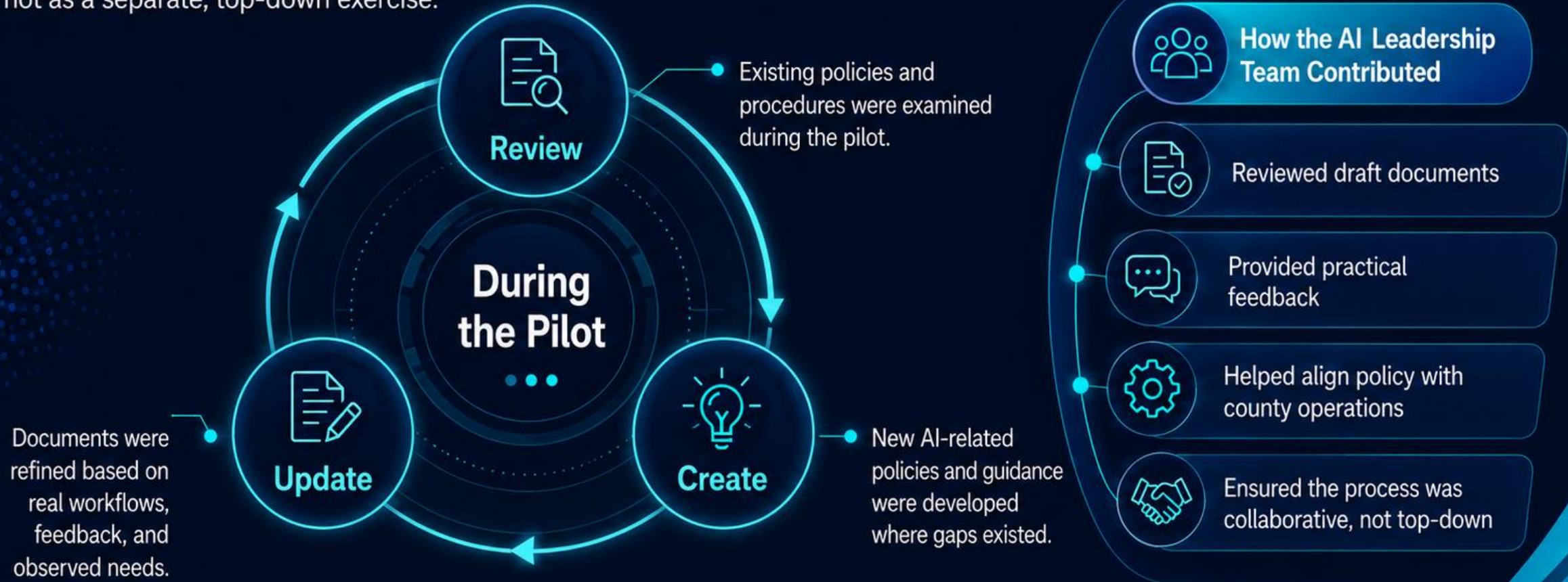
AI Training
Policy



The work required both modernization and creation, strengthening cybersecurity governance while building new AI guardrails.

Policies Were Reviewed, Updated, and Created During the Pilot

Policy development happened alongside real-world testing in Hardee County—not as a separate, top-down exercise.



Because this work happened during the pilot, Hardee County's policies were shaped by real experience and committee input—not created in isolation.



AI Policy for Responsible Use

Hardee County's framework for transparent, accountable, and trusted use of AI.



Why it matters

- Builds public trust
- Promotes transparency
- Supports ethical and responsible use



What it does

- Articulates how Hardee County will use AI
- Guides approved and responsible adoption
- Supports accountability and oversight



Hardee County

AI Policy

Artificial Intelligence Use Policy



How it fits

- Works with Acceptable Use Policy
- Complements Cybersecurity Incident Reporting Policy
- Supports training, governance, and oversight



AI Steering Committee or AI Leadership Team helps review, guide, and update this policy.



This policy does not stand alone. It works as part of **Hardee County's** broader **governance and cybersecurity framework**.

Purpose in Practice

How staff are applying Gen AI
in daily County workflows



Kyle Gilliard

Kyle used Gen AI to modernize Hardee County's internal intranet site, inside.hardeecounty.net. He provided existing non-confidential code so AI could suggest improvements and generate updated HTML. He then tested the redesign on the Forms & Documents page to create a cleaner, more user-friendly experience.



If I give you some code can you modernize this for me?

Absolutely — paste the code here, or upload the file.

I can modernize it by cleaning up structure, improving styling, removing outdated patterns, making it easier to maintain, and preparing it for SQL/API integration if that's where you want to go.



I reviewed the page and there's a good foundation here already. The biggest opportunity is modernizing the layout/CSS while preserving all existing links and file paths exactly as they are.  Pasted text

Here are the main improvements I'd make:

1. Replace the XHTML/transitional-era structure with modern HTML5 semantic layout (`header` , `main` , `section` , responsive flex/grid). That alone will make the site look dramatically cleaner and work much better on phones/tablets without changing any URLs or paths.
2. The page repeats the same "columns/menu/ul/li" pattern many times. Converting those into reusable card-style sections with consistent spacing, typography, and hover states would reduce maintenance and modernize the UI significantly while preserving every existing link target.
3. Several paths mix forward slashes and backslashes (`site\\content\\...` vs `Site/content/...`). Browsers often tolerate this, but standardizing on forward slashes would improve reliability and portability without changing the actual file locations.  Pasted text
4. There are many inline styles and deprecated attributes (`align` , inline widths, XHTML transitional markup). Moving presentation into a modern stylesheet would simplify future edits and make the design much easier to maintain.
5. The site would benefit greatly from a responsive dashboard-style homepage:
 - searchable document sections
 - collapsible categories
 - quick links tiles
 - modern employee portal cards
 - dark blue county/government styling
 - mobile-friendly navigation
 - icons and status banners

None of that requires changing your existing document/file paths.

    ...  Sources

create it for me. and show me a preview of it

create it for me. and show me a preview of it

Absolutely — I'll turn the old employee portal into a modern single-file HTML page, preserving the existing link paths exactly as much as possible and making it previewable right in the canvas.

Modern Employee Portal Preview - html

Copy Edit Download Preview

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1" />
  <title>Hardee County Employee Portal</title>
  <meta name="Keywords" content="Hardee, County, Government" />
  <meta name="Description" content="Official Site of Hardee County Local Government" />
  <meta name="language" content="en-US" />
</style>
:root {
  --blue-950: #09243f;
  --blue-900: #0d3158;
  --blue-800: #164a7a;
  --blue-700: #1f5f99;
  --orange: #f4680b;
  --orange-dark: #c85008;
  --slate-950: #0f172a;
  --slate-800: #1e293b;
  --slate-700: #334155;
  --slate-600: #475569;
  --slate-500: #64748b;
  --slate-300: #cbd5e1;
  --slate-200: #e2e8f0;
  --slate-100: #f1f5f9;
  --slate-50: #f8fafc;
  --white: #ffffff;
  --shadow: 0 16px 40px rgba(15, 23, 42, .12);
}
```

Forms & Documents

Management & Budget:

Annual Reports

[Annual Report Final 2017-2018 \(pdf\)](#)

[Annual Report Final 2018-2019 \(pdf\)](#)

[Annual Report Final 2019-2020 \(pdf\)](#)

[Annual Report Final 2020-2021 \(pdf\)](#)

[Annual Report Final 2021-2022 \(pdf\)](#)

Budgets

[2023-2024 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2022-2023 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2021-2022 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2020-2021 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2019-2020 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2018-2019 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

[2017-2018 Final Budget \(pdf\)](#)

Budget Documents

[Capital Asset Policies and Procedures](#)

[Department Capital Worksheets](#)

[Fixed Assets Property Control](#)

[Fund Descriptions](#)

[Fund Numbers](#)

[Florida Uniform Accounting System Manual 2023](#)

[Line Item Transfer Form](#) * Use ONLY NCR 3 part carbonless paper

[Management and Budget Policies](#)

[Operating Budget Worksheets \(Excel Spreadsheet\)](#)

[Transfers to TT for Shop and R&B Services](#)

Fee Schedules

[Fee Schedule Resolution 2022-19 executed \(pdf\)](#)

[Fee Schedule Resolution 2023-45 executed \(pdf\)](#)

[Fee Schedule Resolution 2017-17 executed \(pdf\)](#)

[Executed Rate Schedule Resolution 2025-60\(pdf\)](#)



Find forms, policies, budgets, and department documents faster.

A modernized, searchable document hub for county employees. Existing file paths and links have been preserved so the page can replace the old layout without moving documents.

Latest Listed Budget

Vacation Request

BCC Directory

Search forms, departments, budgets, policies...

Budget

HR

Purchasing

Admin

IT

SECTIONS

9

DOCUMENTS

83

SEARCHABLE

Yes

DEPENDENCIES

None



Management & Budget

Budgets, audits, asset policies, fund documents, and transfer forms.

Annual Report Final 2017-2018 updated (PDF)

PDF

2019-2020 Final Master Budget (PDF)

PDF

2018-2019 Adopted Budget (PDF)

PDF

Final FY 2017-18 Budget (PDF)

PDF



Human Resources

Leave forms, claims, personnel forms, accident reports, and HR documents.

Absentee or Lateness Form

PDF

Accident Report, Auto- Truck

PDF

Accident Report Form - For File Purposes Only

PDF

Admin Time Sheet

PDF

Jamie Roelle

Jamie used Gen AI to create a Job Safety Analysis & Hazard (JSAH) form, research certifications and training options for custodial staff, and troubleshoot a Microsoft Word template issue. Her examples show how AI can support facilities operations through faster document creation, staff development research, and practical day-to-day problem solving.



Here's a **Job Safety Analysis & Hazard (JSAH) Form** template you can use:

 Edit

JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS & HAZARD (JSAH) FORM

Project Name: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Prepared By: _____

Job Description

Describe the task or activity being performed:

Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

☐ Hard Hat

☐ Safety Glasses

☐ Gloves



Ask anything

Instant ▾



what are some certifications custodial personnel can get?

Here are some useful **certifications and training programs for custodial personnel** — ranging from entry-level to advanced. Many of these help improve skills, workplace safety, professionalism, and career advancement.

Fundamental Custodial & Cleaning Certifications

These are directly focused on custodial work, cleaning techniques, and sanitation:

1. Certified Custodian (CC)

- Basics of custodial duties, cleaning methods, maintenance skills.
- Often offered by community colleges or vocational training centers.

2. Cleaning Management Institute (CMI) Certifications

Offered by the ISSA (a major global cleaning association):

- **Certified Cleaning Technician (CCT)** — Entry-level custodial skills
- **Certified Maintenance Technician (CMT)** — Intermediate skills and procedures
- **Certified Building Service Manager (CBSM)** — Leadership & management focus
- **Green Building Cleaning Technician (GBCT)** — Environmentally safe cleaning practices

3. OS1® Custodial Technician

- Focus on standardized cleaning processes and quality assurance systems.



Safety & Compliance Certifications

Important for compliance with OSHA and workplace safety requirements:

+ Ask anything

Instant ▾



why are my signatures in microsoft word disappearing on the template?

If your **signatures in Microsoft Word** are disappearing from a **template**, there are a few common causes — and fixes — you can try:

🧩 1. The Signature Field Isn't Anchored Properly

If you insert a signature (image or text box) without “anchoring” it, Word may drop it when the template updates or is reopened.

Fix:

1. Right-click your signature image/text box → **Format Picture** or **Format Shape**.
2. Go to **Layout Options** → **See more** → **Position** tab.
3. Check “**Lock anchor**” and set position to “**relative to page**” or “**relative to margin**.”
4. Save again as a .dotx (template) file.

📄 2. Template Protection or Content Controls Are Resetting

If your template uses **content controls** (like fillable fields or signature lines), they can reset when reopened or edited from the template rather than a document based on it.

Fix:

- Always create new files **based on** the template ( > New > Personal > YourTemplate), not by opening the template directly.
- Check under **Developer** > **Controls** that “Content Control Cannot Be Deleted” is unchecked.

+ Ask anything

Instant ▾



Bobby Keene

Bobby used Gen AI as a drafting and organization aid for congressional support materials related to Hardee County's Bostick Roadway and Utilities Improvements. County staff supplied the project facts, scope, cost figures, eligibility details, and local-impact language. AI helped structure and refine drafts and respond quickly as details changed, but staff reviewed, rewrote, fact-checked, and retained responsibility for the final submission materials. The process supported a submission-ready support letter and a competitive 250-word project description for the grant portal.



-  federal_nexus_letter_-_rep._c._scott_fra...
PDF
-  federal_nexus_letter_-_rep._c._scott_fra...
PDF
-  federal_nexus_letter_-_rep._c._scott_fra...
PDF
-  willowbrook_rd_dot_csf.pdf
PDF

Utilizing the attached Federal Nexus Letters, I want to generate a letter to Congressman Scott Franklin's office for support of Hardee County's Bostick Roadway and Utilities Improvements.

We are seeking funding for engineering for a regional lift station and roadway improvements of the Bostick Roadway from US Highway 17 to Hobb Road. We plan to design a triplex lift station and gravity sewer for the length of this road. This will cause us to have to remove the existing road in order to place a sanitary gravity sewer main down the center, leading back to the regional lift station. This will include manholes along the route. Due to this we will have to restore the roadway. While we are at it we would like to improve the road conditions better than what they are. Also improve stormwater drainage and add sidewalks for the constituents. We will also design sanitary force mains that will connect to existing infrastucture ultimatly pumping it back to the Wauchula Hills Wastewater Treatment Facility. These improvements will be part of the Wauchula Hills services area expansion. It will help support water quality for the surrounding environment. It will play into the plan for septic to sewer as it will aid in eliminating septic systems in the area and prevent the need for installation of future septic systems.

Show less ^



How AI Was Used

I want to be clear about how AI was used here. It did not decide what project we were pursuing, what funding we were requesting, or what facts supported the request. Those came from County staff, project materials, cost figures, and local knowledge.

I used AI as a drafting aid to help organize information, refine language, and adapt quickly as details changed. I still reviewed, rewrote, fact-checked, and remained responsible for the final submission.



**AI helped speed the drafting process —
it did not replace my judgment.**

Example Sentence to Add to Your Letter

You could add something like:

The project will include approximately **2 miles of roadway and utility improvements along Bostick Road between U.S. Highway 17 and Hobb Road**. The total estimated project cost is **approximately \$12.9 million**, with **\$1.35 million requested for engineering, design, and permitting** to advance the project toward construction.

✓ If you'd like, I can also help you strengthen the request by adding:

- **Population served / septic systems removed estimate**
- **Nutrient reduction & water quality language** (important for federal nexus)
- **Economic development justification**
- **Hardee County-specific statistics** that make the request more competitive.

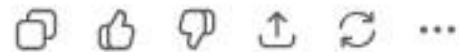
     ...  Sources

Add the example sentence to the letter

If you'd like, I can also help you **make this even stronger for appropriations staff** by adding two things that often help these requests get selected:

- **Economic development language (industrial/ag growth in Hardee County)**
- **Environmental impact language tied to Peace River Basin / nutrient reduction**

Those additions often make the request much more competitive.



add the impact language tied to the peace river basin

✅ If you'd like, I can also help you add **two more things that often strengthen these appropriations requests:**

- 1. Population served / septic tanks removed estimate** (appropriations staff like quantifiable benefits)
- 2. Economic impact language for Hardee County agriculture and logistics corridors**

These small additions can make the request significantly more competitive.



population served within the wauchla hills service area is just around 3,000 and will prevent or remove up to 200 septic systems.

Great — those numbers help strengthen the justification. Here is the **updated letter with the population served and septic reduction incorporated naturally into the environmental and public health section.**

ok so I need to make changes again. Please go back to the version prior to the assistant county managers additional notes.

The congressman's office said they would only fund the utility portion of the project. We will say that the overall cost of the project for construction is \$9 million and the engineering portion is \$320,000. Please add language informing that a portion of the engineering is already funded by the local IDA and EDA

Here is the **revised letter reverting to the version before the Assistant County Manager's edits**, with the new updates from the Congressman's office incorporated:

- **Focus only on the utility portion of the project**
- **Total construction cost: \$9,000,000**
- **Engineering request: \$320,000**
- **Added language that a portion of engineering is already funded by the local IDA and EDA**

however we need to keep the language about rural area of opportunity and fiscally constrained county

Understood. We will **keep the Rural Area of Opportunity and fiscally constrained county language**, while maintaining the **utility-only scope, \$9M construction, \$320k engineering request, and IDA/EDA funding participation.**

Here is the **clean revised letter** with those elements incorporated:

If you'd like, I can also help you do **one last thing that will likely increase approval chances:**
I can **tighten this to match the exact ~300-word format Franklin's office typically submits to the House Appropriations Committee** so staff can **drop it straight into their submission packet with no edits.**



Ok do it

I liked the wording about the long term septic to sewer thing you have before can you add that back in

Good catch — that wording **does strengthen the justification** because Appropriations staff like seeing **long-term infrastructure strategy** tied to environmental protection. I added it back while **keeping the tighter ~300-word format.**

Here is the **revised submission-ready version:**

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for Hardee County's **Bostick Utility Improvements Project** in fiscal year 2026. The entity to receive funding for this project is the **Hardee County Board of County Commissioners**, located at 412 W. Orange Street, Wauchula, Florida 33873.

This project will support engineering and design for a regional sanitary sewer lift station and associated wastewater infrastructure along Bostick Road from U.S. Highway 17 to Hobb Road in Bowling Green, Florida, serving approximately 2 miles of utility improvements. The project includes the design of a triplex regional lift station, gravity sewer collection system, and sanitary force mains that will ultimately convey wastewater to the **Wauchula Hills Wastewater Treatment Facility**.

The total estimated construction cost for the utility portion of the project is approximately \$9 million, with \$320,000 requested for engineering, design, and permitting to advance the project toward construction. Hardee County would welcome the opportunity to pursue funding for the full construction cost of the project; however, if full funding is not available, the County respectfully requests consideration for the engineering and design phase so the project can advance toward future construction funding and implementation. A portion of the engineering work is already being funded locally through the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and the Economic Development Authority (EDA).

This project will expand wastewater infrastructure needed to support regional growth while improving public health and environmental protection. The project will support Hardee County's long-term septic-to-sewer conversion strategy, reducing reliance on individual septic systems and preventing installation of future septic systems within the service area. The **Wauchula Hills service area** currently serves approximately 3,000 residents, and these improvements will help eliminate or prevent up to 200 septic systems, significantly reducing potential nutrient loading to local groundwater and nearby surface waters.

Hardee County is located within a designated Rural Area of Opportunity and is also recognized as a fiscally constrained county, limiting the County's ability to fund major infrastructure improvements without state or federal assistance.

The project will also help improve water quality within the Peace River Basin, which ultimately drains into Charlotte Harbor. Transitioning wastewater flows from individual septic systems to centralized treatment will reduce nutrient loading, improve groundwater quality, and protect downstream surface waters.

This project has a federal nexus because it is for the purposes authorized in Title VI of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



ok I am on the portal submitting the grant application. I need a 250 word project description

Here is a **clear, competitive 250-word project description** tailored for a federal appropriations / Community Project Funding portal. It aligns with the letter language and highlights **environmental impact, rural hardship, and infrastructure need**, which reviewers look for.

From One-Off Prompts to Purpose-Built AI Assistance

Repeatable support for County workflows (with staff still in control)

- Task-specific support

- Grounded in County work

- Reviewed by staff



Built to make **responsible use** easier to repeat.



What Made the Pilot Work

Hardee County's early progress came from leadership, governance, and staff involvement working together from the start.



Leadership

County leadership viewed AI as a Countywide operational priority, not just a technology project.



Governance

Policies, oversight, training, and cybersecurity guardrails were put in place during the pilot to prepare for broader adoption.



Early Involvement

Staff and departments were included early, helping build trust, support, and workflows that reflect real County operations.



These early choices helped Hardee County move **carefully, collaboratively, and with public trust at the center.**

Final Takeaways

Hardee County's pilot shows that responsible AI adoption grows through governance, leadership, trust, and measured experimentation.



01



Start with governance

Even a simple roadmap helps.

02



Build cross-department leadership early

Identify your AI champions.

03



Let policy and training evolve with real use

04



Keep humans accountable for outcomes

05



Protect public trust

06



Give staff room to experiment, with oversight and guardrails



Responsible AI adoption can begin small, stay grounded, and build capacity over time.