



Center for  
**Rural AI**

LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP

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# AI Fundamentals for Rural Communities

A plain-language, hands-on introduction to artificial intelligence for people who run businesses and serve their communities.

Half-Day Workshop   In-Person   No Tech Background Required

[ruralai.org](http://ruralai.org)

in collaboration with The AI Institute at Fort Lewis College

## WHAT IS THIS WORKSHOP?

# Your Introduction to AI

AI Fundamentals is a plain-language, hands-on introduction to artificial intelligence specifically designed for people who run businesses and serve their rural communities. No tech background required. You'll get clear answers to your questions and the practical skills to start using AI tools immediately.

Presented by the Center for Rural AI, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on making sure rural communities have the tools and training to fully participate in the AI economy.

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### Why This Matters to You

If you run a small business, you're probably stretched thin, wearing every hat, managing every task, trying to make ends meet. AI tools won't replace your judgment or your relationships, but they can handle the time-draining work: drafting emails, answering routine questions, summarizing documents, generating ideas. The people who figure this out first will have a real edge.

If you work for a city, county, or nonprofit, your constituents and donors are expecting more with the same or smaller budget. AI can help you stretch your capacity without stretching your staff.

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### What You'll Walk Away With

#### A clear picture of what AI actually is

What it does well, where it falls short, and how it applies to your work.

#### Practical skills you can use right away

You'll work hands-on with AI tools on real tasks and leave with a clear sense of how to apply them immediately. The goal isn't just saving time, it's expanding what you're capable of.

#### Confidence to make decisions about AI

Whether to adopt a tool, push back on a vendor, or know what questions to ask. You'll have the foundation to decide for yourself.

#### A personal action plan

A simple, realistic 30-day checklist tailored to your situation, not a generic roadmap, but something you can actually use.

#### Ongoing community and support

Access to CRAI's resource library, peer network, and follow-on workshops as you go deeper.

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## WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Small business owners and retail operators
- Restaurant, hospitality, and service providers
- Farmers, ranchers, and agricultural co-ops
- City, county, and tribal staff
- Nonprofit directors and program managers
- Chamber and economic development staff

*No technical background required. If you can use a smartphone, you can do this.*

LEVEL 1 — FUNDAMENTALS

# Half-Day Agenda (8:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

**8:00 – 8:30**

**Welcome, Introductions & Lite Breakfast**

Who's in the room, what everyone hopes to get out of it, and a quick lay of the land.

8:30 – 9:15

**MODULE 1**

**What Is AI, and Why Now?**

AI explained in plain terms: what it is, how it learns, and what changed in the last two years. Real examples from businesses and organizations just like yours, not Silicon Valley case studies.

9:15 – 10:15

**MODULE 2**

**What AI Can Do**

A practical introduction to how AI works and where it fits in your day-to-day. We'll cover the key concepts you need to use AI confidently, walk through the four roles AI can play in your work, and see each one in action through real-world scenarios.

10:25 – 11:15

**MODULE 3**

**Your Turn, Hands-On Practice**

The heart of the workshop. Practice each of the four AI roles on tasks you actually face in your work. You'll work through hands-on exercises in each role, bringing real challenges from your own business or organization to practice with.

11:15 – 11:45

**MODULE 4**

**Building Your Action Plan**

A guided self-assessment. Identify your top one or two use cases, map concrete next steps, and learn how to evaluate AI tools before spending money.

**11:45 – 12:00**

**Q&A & Next Steps**

Open floor. CRAI program overview and how to stay connected.

<b>FORMAT</b> Half-day, in-person	<b>MAX PARTICIPANTS</b> 30	<b>COST</b> \$50 per person	<b>MATERIALS</b> Digital workbook & resource guide
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Register now at

**ruralai.org/events**



Questions?  
info@ruralai.org

The \$50 workshop registration fee is a program service fee paid in exchange for participation, materials, and access to follow-on resources. It is not a charitable contribution and is not tax-deductible. The Center for Rural AI has applied for recognition as a tax-exempt organization under IRC Section 501(c)(3). Donors should consult their tax advisor regarding deductibility.

## BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

# Set Yourself Up for Success

## Technical Basics

A basic comfort level with your computer is helpful. During the hands-on lab modules, you'll be opening and switching between multiple browser tabs, documents, and platforms simultaneously.

Familiarity with uploading documents, copy/paste, basic web browsing, and downloading files will help you get the most out of the interactive portions of the workshop, particularly the exercises in Module 3.

### Set Up Your AI Tool Before the Workshop

You only need **one** of these tools. Pick whichever appeals to you — you'll be working directly inside it during Module 2 demos and Module 3 exercises.

**We recommend a paid plan (~\$20/mo)** for the best workshop experience. Free tiers have limitations that may restrict the hands-on exercises. You can cancel anytime after the workshop.

**ChatGPT**  
chat.openai.com

or

**Google Gemini**  
gemini.google.com

or

**Claude**  
claude.ai

## Workshop Engagement

### Bring a real challenge

Think of one or two real challenges your business or organization is currently facing — a workflow bottleneck, a time-consuming admin task, or a question you've been meaning to research. You'll use this directly in Module 3's hands-on exercises, and it becomes the foundation of the personal 30-day action plan you'll build in Module 4.

### Bring source material

Your organization's mission statement and a brief background summary, for example, could serve as source material during the drafting and communication exercises in Module 3.

### Bring a long document

Any long document, report, or form you've been meaning to make sense of — one of the lab exercises focuses specifically on extracting answers from lengthy documents, so bring something real if you have it.

### Know where you're stretched thin

Whether you're a small business owner, nonprofit manager, city or county staff, or in operations — think about which tasks drain the most time. That context will help you identify your top AI use cases during the guided self-assessment in Module 4.

*"You don't need to prepare anything elaborate. Just come ready to work on something real — the more specific your challenge, the more useful the workshop will be."*