

Using AI in Government ...for Beginners

Ken Eakin

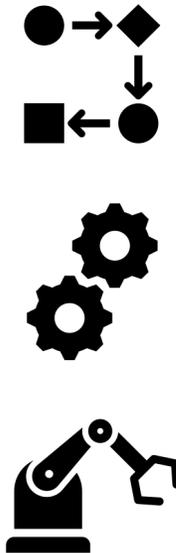
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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AI?

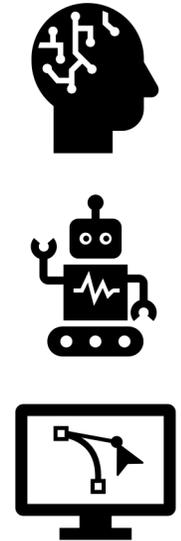
Traditional Automation

- Traditional automation is algorithmic: based on coded rules.
- The same inputs will produce the same outputs every time.
- It's powerful, but often inflexible.
- E.g. the finance system automatically calculates available working capital based on inputs to the general ledger each month.



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

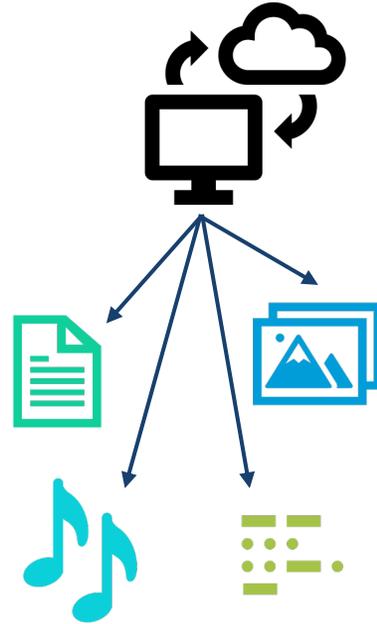
- AI broadly refers to computer systems that can perform tasks typically requiring some degree of human intelligence.
- AI appears to “learn” new things based on your inputs.
- E.g. you tell AI what kind of vacation experience you want, how much budget and time you have, and it creates a custom itinerary for you.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY *GENERATIVE* AI?

Generative AI

- **Generative AI** is a subset of AI that learns from existing data to generate entirely *new* content, such as **text**, images, music, or computer code.
- When we talk about “AI” in this session today, we’re referring to **generative** AI– sometimes known also as large language models (LLMs)



Popular GenAI brands:



ChatGPT



Copilot

Other AI

- Other Uses of AI (non-generative):
 - autonomous vehicles
 - facial recognition systems
 - recommendation algorithms
- Will *not* be the focus today



LET'S TRY IT: AI DEMO



What can I help you with?

Tell me some funny jokes involving chickens



KEY STRENGTHS OF AI

APPLICATIONS IN GOVERNMENT

CONTENT CREATION & PROCESSING:

- ✓ Drafting routine correspondence, briefings, reports
- ✓ Summarizing long documents, meeting notes
- ✓ Translating between languages
- ✓ Standardizing format and style across documents

Example: Turning technical report into a public-facing summary

DATA & ANALYSIS:

- ✓ Extracting data from forms and documents
- ✓ Classifying and routing documents
- ✓ Identifying patterns and trends in datasets
- ✓ Risk scoring and anomaly detection

Example: Flagging applications that need priority review

SERVICE & COMMUNICATION:

- ✓ Answering routine inquiries (with human oversight)
- ✓ Drafting responses to common questions
- ✓ Triageing requests to appropriate teams
- ✓ Generating notifications and reminders

Example: Providing “how-to” responses to confused end-users seeking to do simple online transactions.

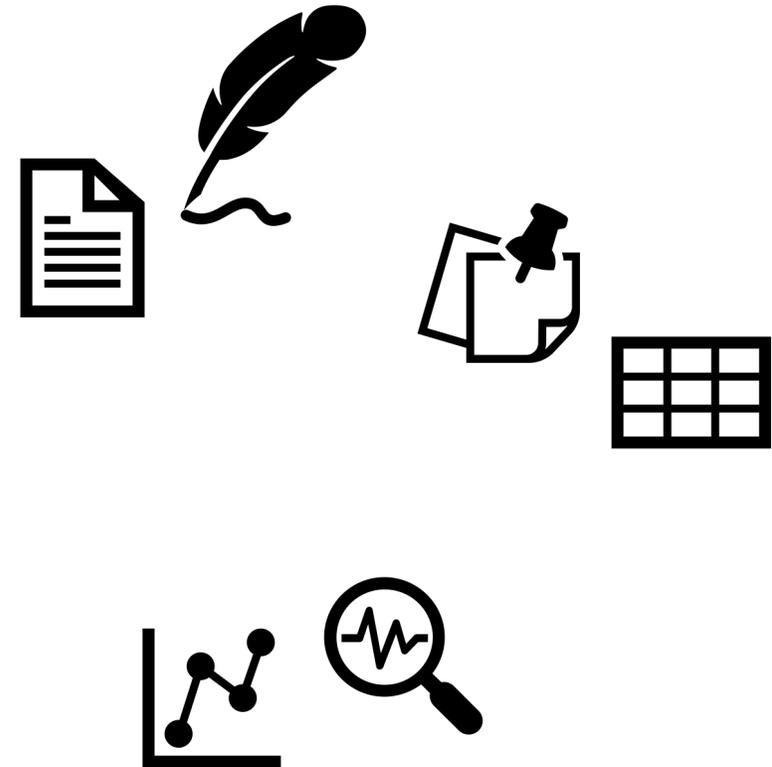
HOW CAN GEN AI HELP ME?

*“Generative AI is a type of AI that learns from existing data **to generate entirely new content**, such as **text, images, music, or computer code.**”*

In **government**, we deal a lot with documents and information.

AI can often help you with:

- Creating or editing documents
- Gathering and summarizing information
- Analyzing and interpreting data



AI IN GOVERNMENT



Document Processing	Information Management	Communication & Service	Analysis & Decision Support	Regulatory & Compliance	Financial Operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• summarize reports• extract data• classify documents• translate documents• process applications• review contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• search databases• retrieve files• match records• verify information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• answer inquiries• generate responses• provide guidance• triage cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyze trends• detect patterns• flag anomalies• assess risk• score applications• prioritize cases• predict outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• monitor compliance• audit records• detect fraud• screen applications• validate eligibility• check requirements• identify violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• calculate benefits• reconcile accounts• generate invoices• assess taxes• allocate resources

Do you perform any of these tasks?

WHAT IS AI NOT (YET) GOOD AT?

GOVERNMENT APPLICATIONS



- X Understanding nuance and political context
- X Making ethical or value-based judgments
- X Handling unique, unprecedented situations
- X Knowing what it doesn't know
- X Ensuring perfect accuracy without human verification

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONSIBLE AI USE

PRINCIPLE	ACTION	EXAMPLES
Human Accountability	AI supports, humans decide	Human review of draft reports, data summaries
Mandatory Human Review	Humans must review and approve decisions affecting rights, law, finances	Determining benefit eligibility, legal opinions
Privacy & Confidentiality	Do NOT upload sensitive info	Excluding any personal data or classified info
Approved Information	Use only de-identified/public data	Using open datasets, anonymized examples
Policy Compliance	Follow approved tools and reporting	Complying with your organization's AI policies and guidance

HOW AI FITS IN WITH LEAN THINKING

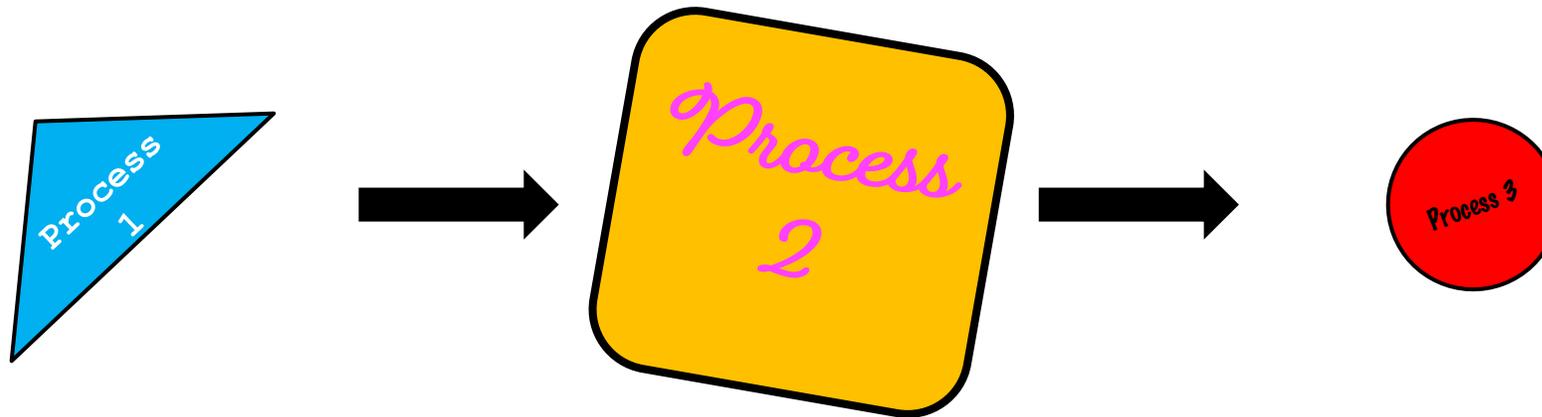
BOTTLENECKS

We draw our process maps with as if the amount of *effort* were equal at each step:

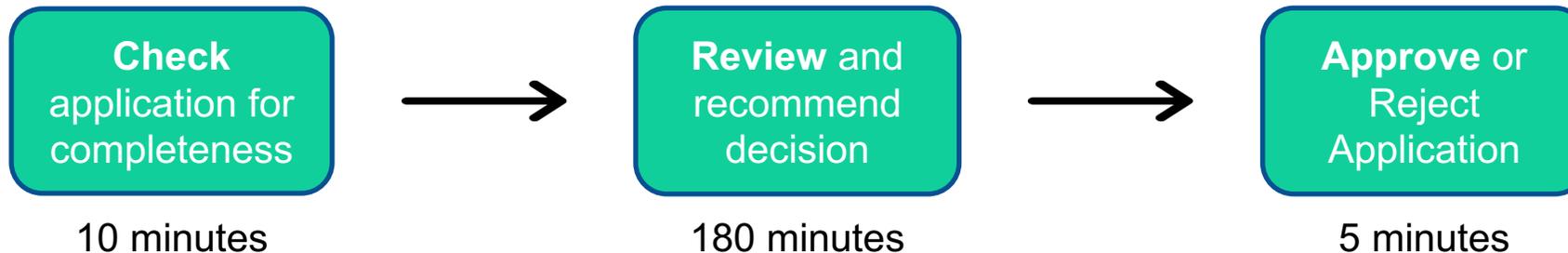


BOTTLENECKS

If we mapped our workflow by the **actual effort** required to perform the work at each step, our process maps would look more like this:



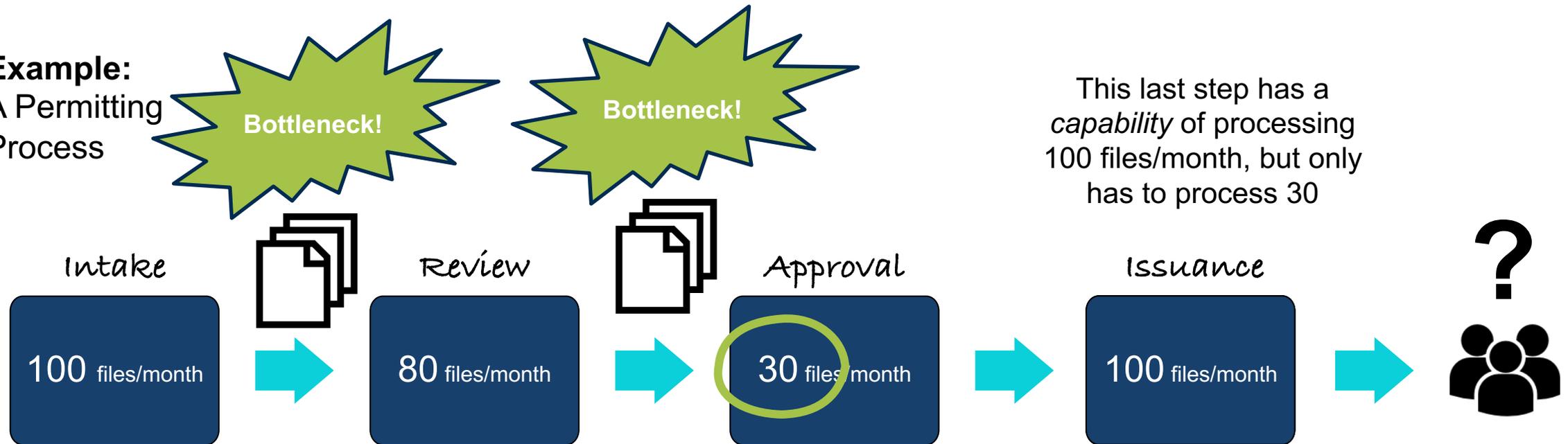
Example:



BOTTLENECKS

Every process step in every value stream has a *different* productive capacity (for many different reasons)

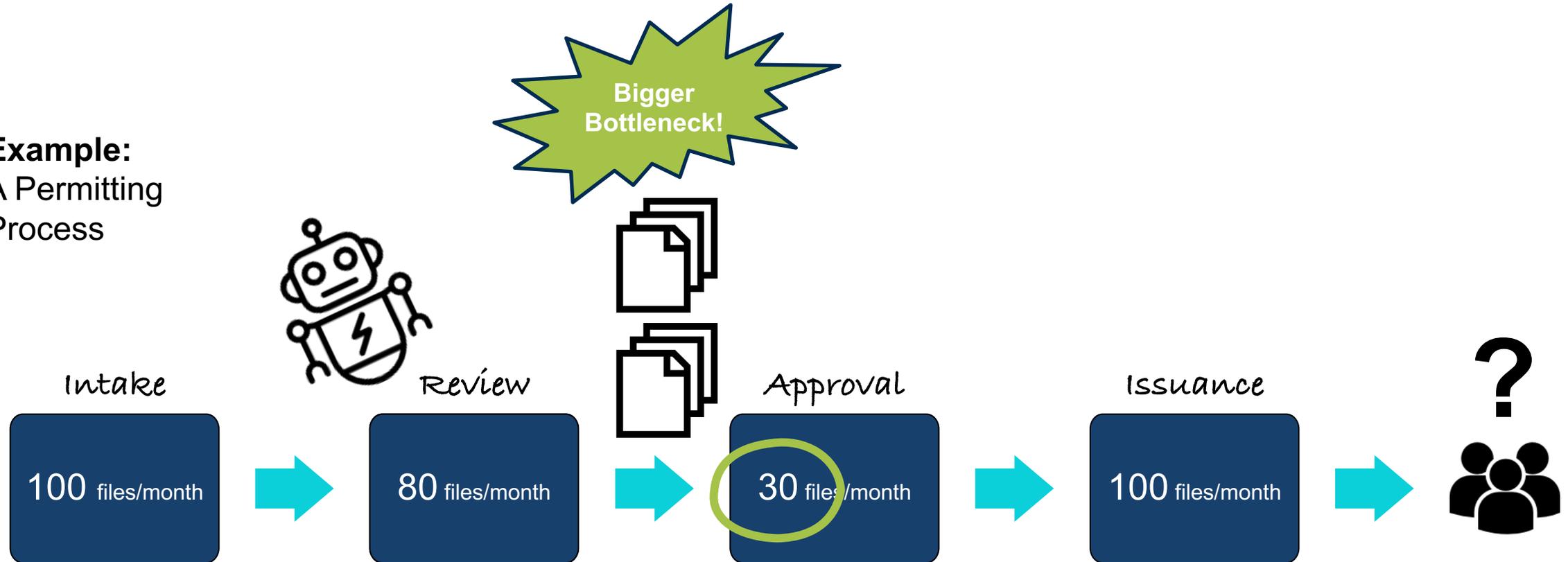
Example:
A Permitting
Process



At what rate do the clients get their permits?

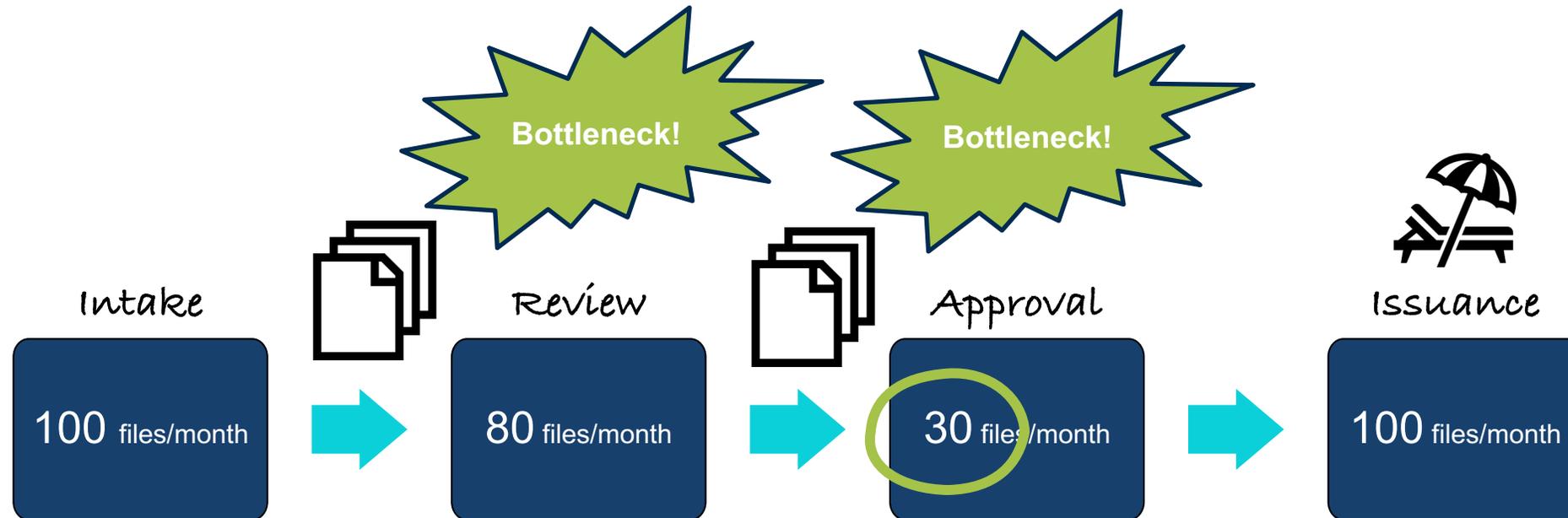
AI AND BOTTLENECKS

Example:
A Permitting
Process



At what rate do the clients get their files *now*?

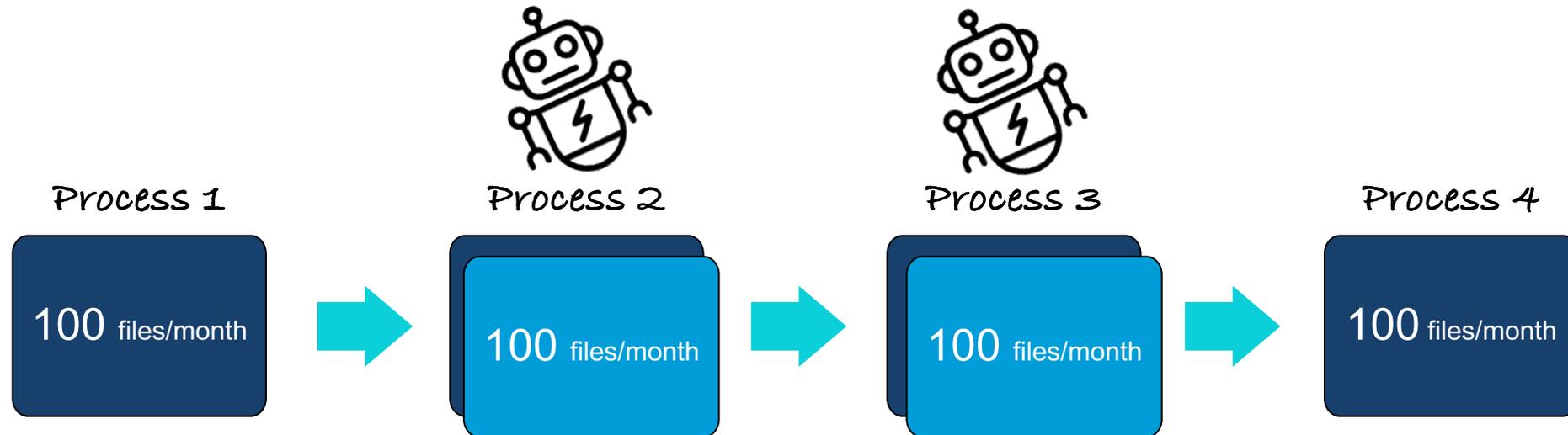
THE LAW OF BOTTLENECKS



1. Clients receive the output at the rate of the **slowest** process step in the entire value stream
2. A **bottleneck** results whenever a process step produces outputs at an average rate that is **slower** than the step immediately *before* it.
 - *The flip side of a bottleneck: **underutilization** will result whenever a process step produces outputs at a rate **faster** than the step immediately before it.*

GOAL = BALANCE

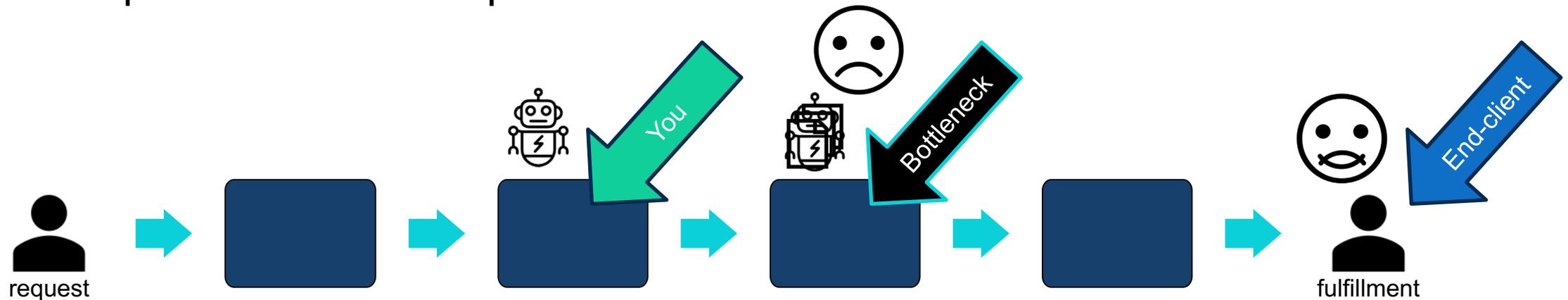
The ideal value stream is one where *all* the process steps have the exact *same* productive capacity-- the workload is perfectly ***balanced*** across the entire value stream. No process step is ever overburdened or idle.



If AI improves
the capacity of the bottleneck step(s)
then it is a genuine improvement!

FOCUS ON THE END CLIENT

- AI can often help you do your *individual* work faster and better
- As you improve your individual productivity with AI, be mindful of inadvertently creating a **bottleneck** downstream from you.
- **Best practice:** deploy AI at the the bottleneck step in the value stream to improve the client experience.



USING AI EFFECTIVELY

Example: The Salty Water Agency



An oil-tanker called the MV Barnacle has run aground. You are an Analyst who has been tasked to write Speaking Notes for the Tuna Turner, Executive Director of Salty Water Agency, for an upcoming press conference. Ms. Turner will be giving an update tomorrow morning and needs you to write her speaking notes ASAP.

Using the news article, ask AI to write your speaking notes.

Example: The Salty Water Agency



What happened?

The Art of the Prompt

- AI's outputs are only as good as its inputs: “garbage in, garbage out”.
- Treat AI as if it were a student intern on their first day: bright and eager to please, but knows nothing about your work, the lingo, the people, or the organizational culture...so you have to spell it out for them.

The Art of the Prompt

We assume AI knows what we know and thinks the way we think:

All the relevant facts and data; background info

Client preferences

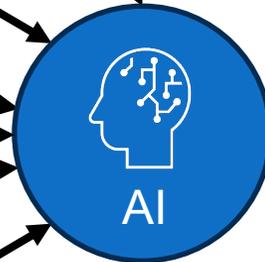
Constraints

“Gimme dis”

Emphasis, tone, length, style, etc

Previous examples (good ones!)

Template to be used



Do we know what the client wants?

Output



Outcome?

Do we know what the client is trying to achieve?



Key Question to Ask:
What do we need to “feed” our AI so that it can produce the right **output** to achieve the right **outcome**?



WRITING GOOD PROMPTS

What is your role? What output are you trying to produce? For whom?

e.g. I am an *Analyst* [**role**] trying to write a set of *speaking notes on the MV Barnacle situation* [**output**] for the *Executive Director of a Government Agency* [**for whom**]

What background, context, and data do you need to provide AI?

e.g. news article on MV Barnacle

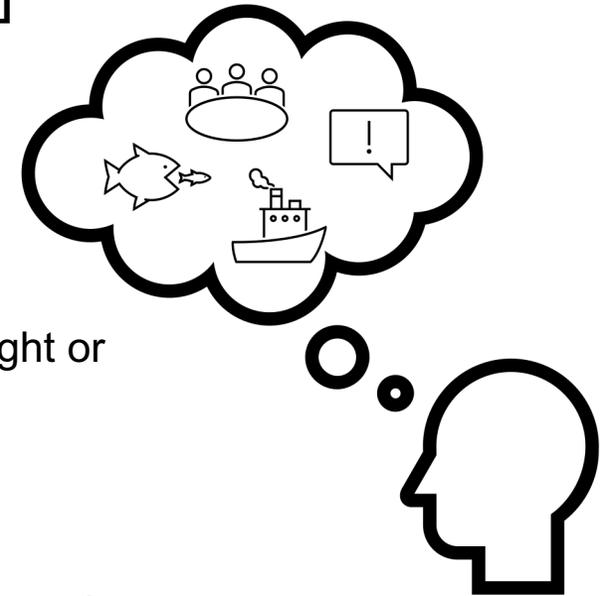
What parameters or constraints exist?

What does the Executive Director want in terms of length, detail, tone, style, organization and formatting? Who is her audience? What does she want to highlight or downplay? What's her angle or bias? What is she ultimately trying to achieve?

What might an ideal outcome look like?

Provide AI with a great example to copy

e.g. is there a previous example of speaking notes on a different topic that the Executive Director found very helpful and effective?





Example: The Salty Water Agency

When we asked these questions, the Executive Director's office provided us with a template that specifies the desired style and content of the speaking notes. Let's try it again!

New Prompt:

I am an Analyst trying to write a set of speaking notes on the MV Barnacle situation for Ms. Tuna Turner, Executive Director of a Government Agency.

Based on the attached news article and the attached template, please write the notes. Pay attention to the content, structure and format requested in the template.

Example: The Salty Water Agency

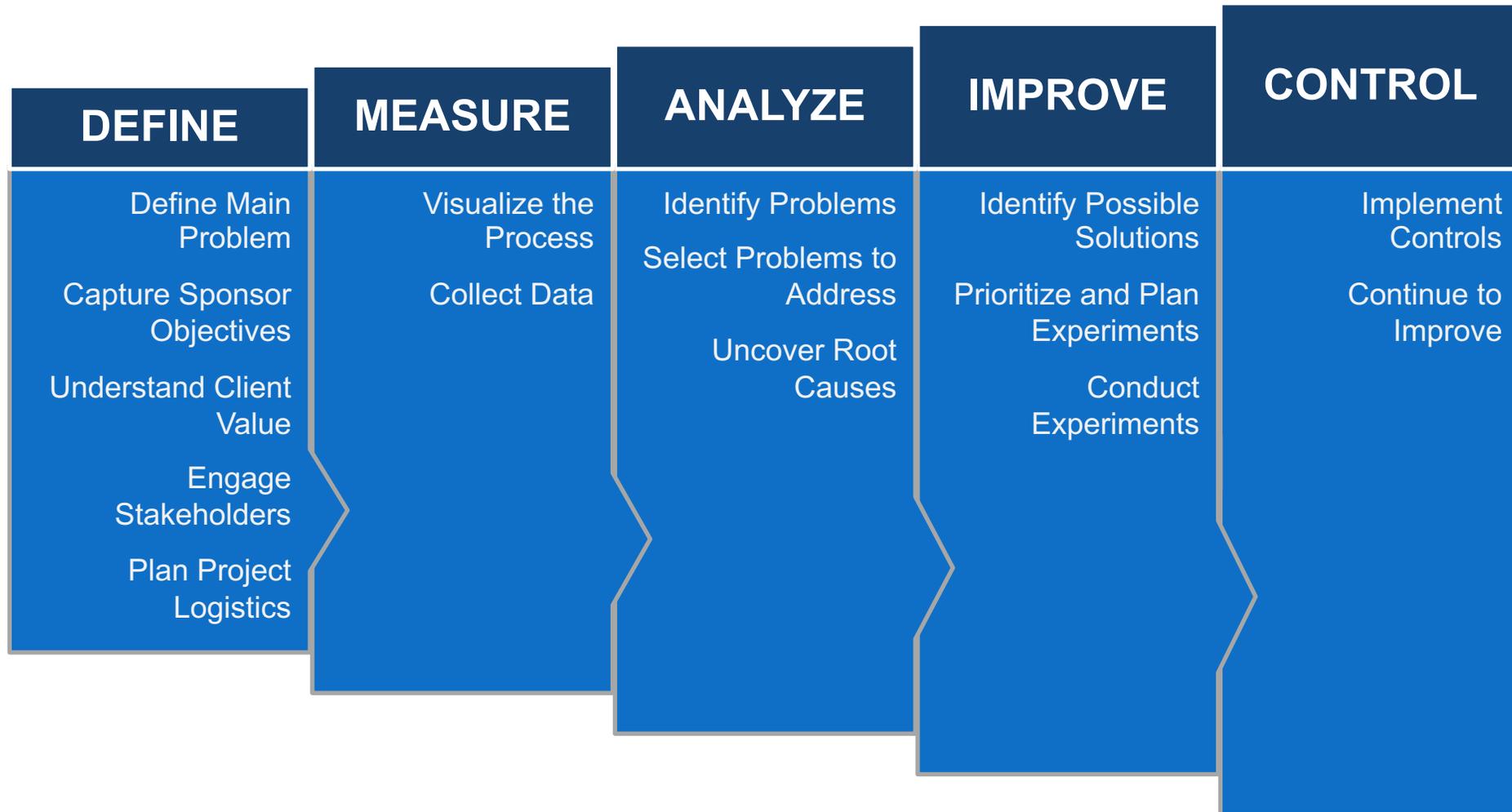


Any better?

USING AI IN YOUR CI PRACTICE

DMAIC

HOW CAN WE USE AI TO FACILITATE OUR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS?



OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN DMAIC

Define

- Synthesize VOS interview notes
- Drafting SIPOC
- Drafting Problem Statements
- Drafting Charters
- Draft Communications for Sponsor

Measure

- Synthesize VOC interview notes
- Synthesize VOE interview notes
- Calculate and Analyze Data Sheet
- Identify possible gaps in your project so far

Analyze

- Calculate and Analyze Data Sheet
- Create Affinity Diagram of Problems
- Create Interrelationship Diagrams

Improve

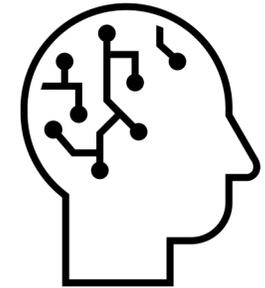
- Craft provocative challenges for stretch brainstorming
- Create Affinities Diagram of Ideas
- Draft A3s
- Draft Pre-Mortem
- Draft Communications for Sponsor

Control

- Create first draft of final report or slide deck

SIX AI ROLES IN DMAIC PROJECTS

1. **Analyst** — Calculations, data analysis, pattern detection
2. **Synthesizer** — Organizing qualitative data into themes
3. **Drafter** — First drafts of structured Lean documents
4. **Researcher** — Pre-engagement intelligence gathering
5. **Thinking Partner** — Challenging assumptions, stress-testing
6. **Knowing the Boundaries** — Where AI should NOT go



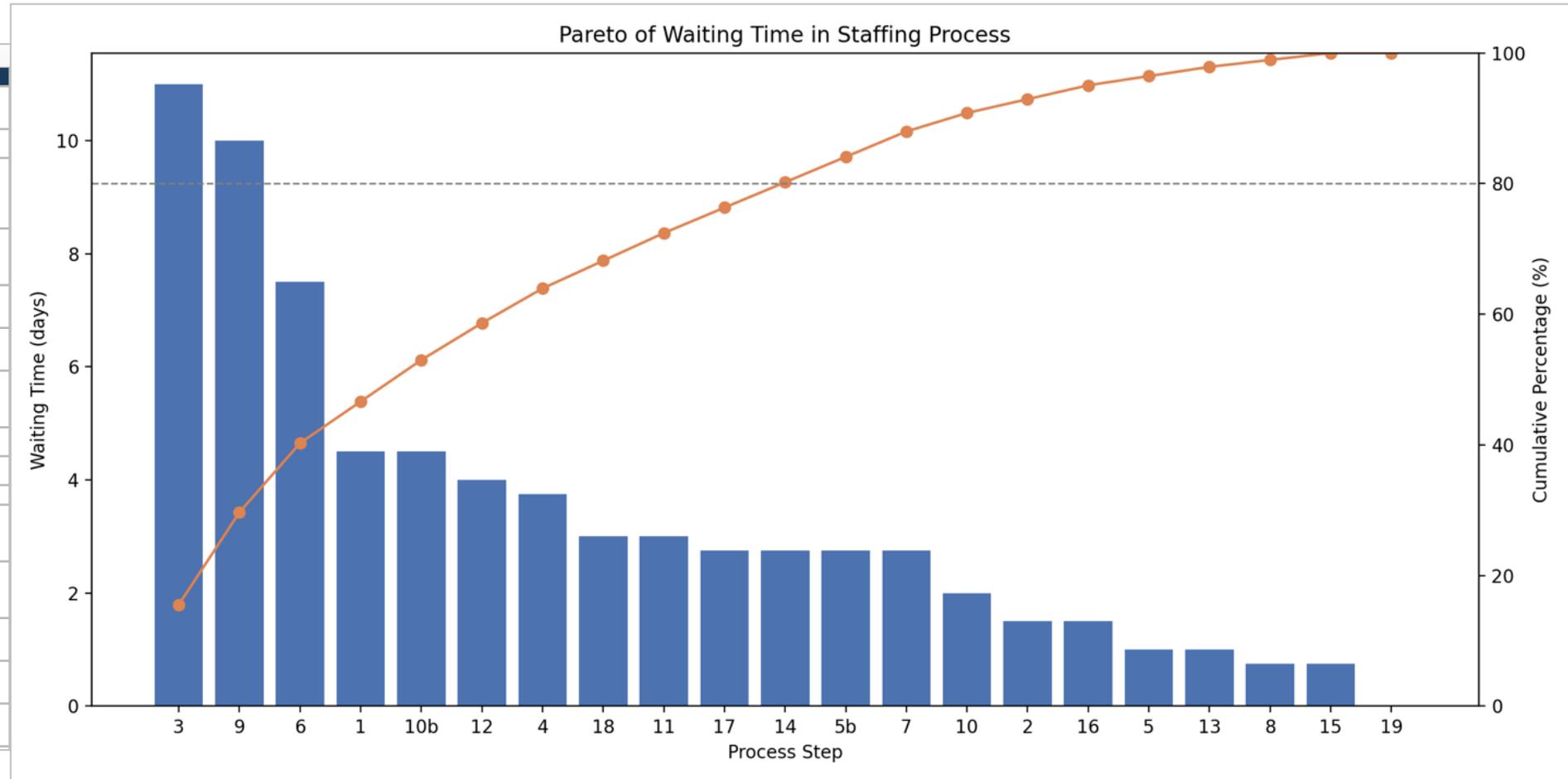
KEY PRINCIPLE: AI works **BETWEEN** sessions. You work **DURING** sessions.

Example: Analyzing Data

From Spreadsheet to Pareto Chart in seconds



	A	B	C	D
	#	Process Step	Owner	PT (days)
1	1	Hiring manager identifies vacancy and completes Staffing Request Form	Hiring Mgr	0.5
2	2	HR Advisor receives and reviews Staffing Request	HR Advisor	0.5
3	3	Classification review / verification (confirm the position's pay band and job level are properly classified before posting)	Classification	1
4	4	Budget confirmation from Finance	Finance	0.25
5	5	HR Advisor drafts job posting and screening criteria	HR Advisor	2
6	5b	HR Advisor schedules review meeting with Hiring Manager	HR Advisor	0.25
7	6	Hiring Manager reviews and revises job posting (by email)	Hiring Mgr + HR Advisor	0.5
8	7	HR Director reviews and approves job posting	HR Director	0.25
9	8	Job posting published (external job board, county website)	Staffing Asst	0.25
10	9	Posting period open	—	0
11	10	Applications received and screened against criteria	HR Advisor + Staffing Asst	4
12	10b	HR Advisor schedules interviews with panel members and candidates	HR Advisor	0.5
13	11	Interview panel conducts interviews	Panel (3 people)	2
14	12	Panel completes scoring and reference checks	HR Advisor + Hiring Mgr	2
15	13	HR Advisor prepares selection package for approval	HR Advisor	1



Example: Summarize Themes from VOC

Two full pages of VOC notes:



Synthesizer

Data Set 4: Voice of Customer (VOC) — Full Interview Notes
Three VOC interviews conducted during the Measure phase with “customers” of the staffing process.

VOC Interview 1: Mike Fontaine, Director of Public Works (Hiring Manager)
Interviewed by: Lean Facilitator | Duration: 30 minutes

What do you need from the staffing process?
“A qualified person in the chair, ready to work, within a reasonable timeframe. I need to know what’s expected of me up front — give me a checklist, a timeline, and a single point of contact. I need the forms to make sense. I need someone to tell me where my file is without me having to chase it. And honestly? I just want certainty. If you tell me I’ll take 8 weeks, I’ll plan around it. What kills me is the unpredictability — sometimes it’s 6 weeks, sometimes 14, and nobody can tell me which it’ll be until it’s over. Also, if there are things I can do to speed it up, just tell me what they are and within reason, I’ll do them. I’m willing to invest time up front if it saves time overall.”

How is the process meeting your needs today?
“The people in HR are helpful when I can reach them. Tom Bradley is a lifesaver — he walks me through things, anticipates my questions, and keeps things moving. But Tom is one person. When I work with other advisors, it’s a different experience. The interview process itself is fair and well-run. And I trust that the selections are defensible — we haven’t had a grievance upheld in my department.”

How is the process NOT meeting your needs?
“Speed is the biggest issue. I lost my top candidate for Building Inspector because it took 11 weeks from my request to the verbal offer. She took a job in the next county while we were still getting the posting approved. The forms are confusing — I fill them out wrong not because I’m careless but because they’re poorly designed. The cost centre code field — how would I know that? That’s a Finance thing. And nobody tells me where my file is. I submitted a request and it disappeared into a black hole for three weeks before someone told me classification was backed up. If I’d known, I could have at least planned for the delay.”

What would you suggest?
“Give me a one-page guide that says here’s exactly what we need from you, here’s exactly what happens next, and here’s the timeline. Let me track my file online like I track a package — your request is in classification, your posting is with the Director for approval. For positions we hire every year, don’t make me start from scratch each time. And let me sit down with the advisor face-to-face to write the posting together. The email back-and-forth is killing us.”

VOC Interview 2: Sandra Lee, Director of Community Services (Hiring Manager)
Interviewed by: Lean Facilitator | Duration: 25 minutes

What do you need from the staffing process?
“The right person, properly screened, with qualifications I can verify. I need confidence that the screening was done right so I’m not second-guessing every candidate who walks through the door. And I need a smooth onboarding experience — when someone starts, they should feel welcomed and set up for success, not confused and abandoned.”

How is the process meeting your needs today?
“The structured interviews are good. The scoring process works. HR is professional and follows the rules. I trust the integrity of the process.”

I don’t trust that vague criteria will catch the and I know that adds a week. But I’d rather sequences for two years. The onboarding is we sometimes fumble the landing — new ed to help them. That’s a terrible first

write demonstrated experience in e managing community programs, as won’t need to shadow every screening department. And notify IT the moment the hire

ministrative Coordinator,

respect for my time. A sense that the t real interaction with this employer — it tells

re professional, the questions were fair and my experience. The verbal offer was warm preciated.”

weeks! I assumed I didn’t make the cut. arely enough time to rearrange my schedule. ted applying to other jobs. I was about to me. I almost didn’t take it because I’d lost process, how will they manage my career? ccess email for two days. Not exactly the

timeline and here’s what to expect. A status eing reviewed or interviews are being he dark for weeks. And have everything at least have the porch light on when I finally

1. Predictability and visibility of the hiring timeline

Unmet need: Clients need to know *where their file is, what happens next, and how long it will realistically take* — even if the answer is “it will take a while.”

Evidence from the interviews

- A hiring manager explicitly says unpredictability is more damaging than long cycle time: sometimes the process takes 6 weeks, sometimes 14, and “nobody can tell me which it’ll be until it’s over.” [\[Data Set 4 - VOC | Word\]](#)
- Another describes their request disappearing into a “black hole” for weeks, only later learning that classification was backed up. [\[Data Set 4 - VOC | Word\]](#)
- The recent hire reports multiple long periods of silence (six weeks after applying, three weeks after interviewing), which nearly caused them to accept another offer and lose confidence in the organization. [\[Data Set 4 - VOC | Word\]](#)

Why this matters: Clients are not just asking for speed — they are asking for *certainty*. They want to plan staffing, workloads, and career decisions around a process they can see and trust.

2. Clear, usable guidance on client responsibilities and inputs

Unmet need: Clients need clarity on *what is expected of them, why it matters, and how to do it correctly the first time*.

Example: Create Challenges for Brainstorming



Inputs: VSM, Charter Objectives, Root Causes

2. Project Objectives
Build upon previous improvements to:

These are the best "leverage points" to test first because they create multiple downstream problems:

- #6 No searchable library/templates** (Driver 45, Driven 5)
 - Drives: #3 email ping-pong, #5 vague criteria, #9 tribal knowledge, plus smaller effects on #1, #4, #7.
 - Case grounding: postings are often drafted from scratch; no library is explicitly noted. [[Slowvale VSM | HTML](#)], [[Data Set 3... - Problems | Word](#)]
- #9 Tribal knowledge not documented/shared** (Driver 40, Driven 15)
 - Drives: #5 vague criteria and multiple "coordination" problems (email, scheduling, visibility).
 - Case grounding: "personal workarounds not shared" is directly noted. [[Data Set 3... - Problems | Word](#)], [[1 Slowvale...e Study v2 | Word](#)]
- #2 Classification queue has no triage** (Driver 35, Driven 0)
 - Drives: #7 reactive scheduling, #8 visibility issues, plus some escalation email/bottleneck effects.
 - Case grounding: "No triage; routine waits behind complex" is explicitly called out. [[Slowvale VSM | HTML](#)], [[Data Set 3... - Problems | Word](#)]
- #1 Forms/inputs incomplete & confusing** (Driver 25, Driven 10)
 - Drives: #3 email ping-pong and contributes to vague criteria and scheduling delays.
 - Case grounding: intake C&A and incompleteness are flagged in the VSM and Data Set 3. [[Slowvale VSM | HTML](#)], [[Data Set 3... - Problems | Word](#)]

- **Eliminate an entire stage (Request & approvals):**
What would we have to change so that Phase 1 (Steps 1–8) disappears entirely—no separate request intake, no sequential approvals—and we still maintain defensibility and quality?
- **Eliminate an entire stage (Posting period / policy wait):**
What would we have to change so that the 10-day posting period becomes unnecessary—i.e., Step 9 is eliminated—and the process remains compliant and fair?
- **Make the first draft the final draft 90% of the time (posting):**
What would we have to change so that the first job posting draft is the final draft 90% of the time—meaning Step 6 "review & revise" essentially vanishes as a loop?
- **Reduce the entire process to 5 days:**
What would we have to change so that a hiring manager request turns into an employee start date in 5 business days end-to-end, despite today's 78-day elapsed baseline and multiple handoffs?
- **Zero rework on forms (perfect intake quality):**
What would we have to change so that staffing request forms are submitted with zero rework—no incomplete fields, no round-trips, no clarifying emails—every single time
- **Candidates start within 1 week of the Board meeting decision:**
What would we have to change so that candidates can start work within one week of the

Example: Creating a Spaghetti Diagram

Client

JD writer

EX Classification (Fatima)

EX Classification (Anne)

Prompt:
Create a spaghetti diagram like the example attached, but based on the attached VSM.

COMMISSNER
DG **DC** **OPS** **SR** **ADV** **DGO**
TRANSLATION
COMME
DIRECTOR OPS
DIRECTOR F.G.
ADMIN
WRITER/SME
OPS MANAGER

(EX Classification): 7.2 days Case; 6 months t Case; 2 years

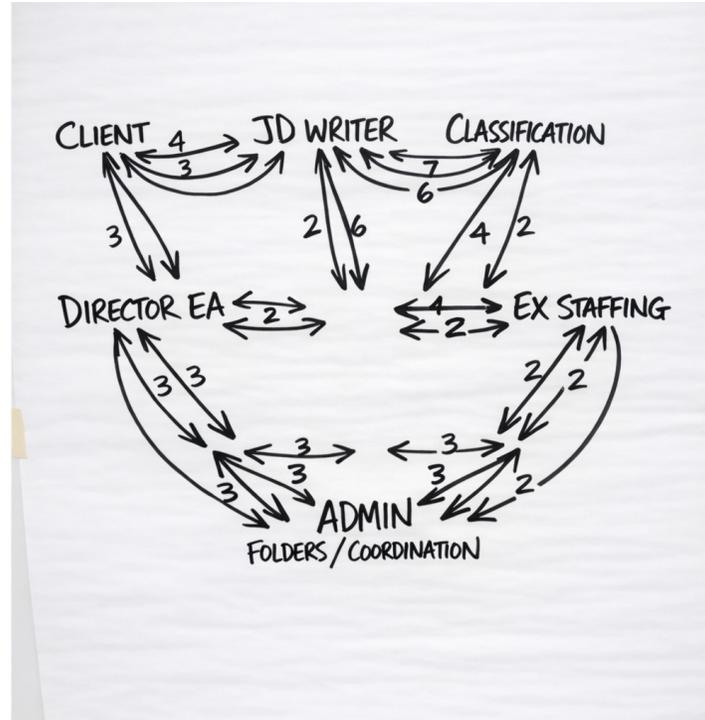
Graphic Artist?

Results

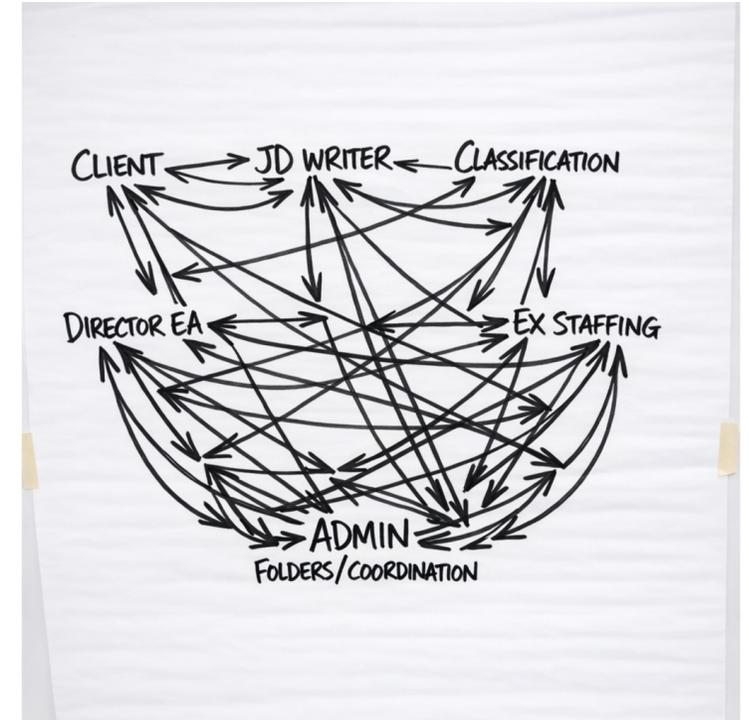
Attempt 1



Attempt 2



Attempt 3



Learning: Copilot is not very good at creating diagrams!

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT AWAY

1. Identify repetitive and tedious **tasks** that you perform regularly—make a list of the ones you think AI could help you with.
2. Start with something simple— **do an experiment** on a old file. Refine your prompt until you get what you're looking for.
3. Create a ***prompt library*** for your team so that the whole team can benefit from proven prompts.

LEARN MORE WITH LEAN AGILITY



New Course: PRACTICAL AI FOR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT SPECIALISTS

A Two-day Virtual Course – March 30-31, 2026

- **Day 1:** How AI applies to government work
- **Day 2:** How to use AI to save time as Lean facilitator

Learn more and register using the QR code or link

<https://leanagility.com/en/practical-ai-for-process-improvement>

