



CSIR AI Symposium: AI for Enterprise Transformation

Communications Portfolio

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science, technology
& innovation

Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



CSIR

Touching lives through innovation

Status of AI Application, Adoption and Integration within the Communications Portfolio



Where we are: AI adoption in Communications



A small number of communications practitioners are experimenting deliberately

Centrally, for RDI communications, our approach is learning by doing, documenting and disclosing AI use.



The most active AI use is happening outside communications

Researchers are generating their own images and slides to illustrate concepts to external stakeholders.



We are drafting a communications-specific AI usage guideline

To assist both practitioners and researchers with ethical and efficient use

The question:

How do we raise capability without slowing delivery, losing control of the brand or compromising ethical communication practice?

Existing AI-related projects, capabilities, platforms and initiatives

Considerations for AI-use in communications

In line with CSIR policies and current practice

Existing CSIR-wide requirements



The CSIR-wide Generative AI Usage Guideline remains the primary reference: responsible use, human oversight and accountability.



No confidential, personal, proprietary or restricted CSIR information in unapproved tools; AI output is never final or authoritative.



Existing approval, legal, privacy, information security, brand and publication processes still apply to AI-assisted work.

Concerns raised



Uncertainty about approved tools and access, use of personal AI accounts, and handling of internal documents and presentations.



AI-generated visuals can look convincing yet be inaccurate, off-brand or unsuitable for serious stakeholder contexts.



AI-assisted drafts arrive from other business units with no record of how they were produced or what was checked.

Draft guidelines for AI-use in communications

Proposed communication controls for discussion and policy consideration

Before using AI

-  Confirm the tool is approved for the task; MS Copilot is recommended as it is integrated with SharePoint and secure for that reason.
-  Check whether the task involves confidential, restricted, proprietary, client, personal or unpublished information.
-  Prefer public, generic or previously approved material, and decide upfront what level of human or specialist review is required.

While and after using AI

-  Use AI as an assistant, not the author or source of truth; never present AI wording as a real quote.
-  Manually check names, titles, dates, figures and technical claims, and avoid overstating CSIR capability or readiness.
-  Review for accuracy and tone, remove unsupported claims, disclose AI use, and follow the applicable CSIR approval process.

Strategic opportunities where AI could be leveraged for impact, operational effectiveness and competitiveness

Strategic opportunities for AI in communications

AI as an assistant for efficient delivery: parsing complex science, project management and ideation

01



Content production

Faster drafting, summarising and repurposing across channels, with practitioner review built in

02



Multimedia

Story spines, edit maps and shoot planning drawn directly from interview material

03



Campaigns

Structured tracking of story leads, assets, interviews and approvals in one pipeline view

04



Briefing

Rapid background packs on complex science so communications practitioners arrive briefed

05



Brand control

Review routes for AI-assisted material from researchers and other units

BUT public facing communication needs human oversight and extreme caution in line with responsible and governed use

Existing and potential AI use cases relevant to the Division's RDI and Portfolio's enterprise support activities

AI use cases across the communication value chain

Use cases relevant to RDI storytelling and enterprise communication support

Communication function	In place today	Note
Interviews and transcripts	AI-generated interview notes	Time saver, improves auditable documentation, but huge risks for accuracy if used as is
Video production	Planning notes and edit maps	Story direction, interviewees, logistics, b-roll suggestions and follow-up tasks are drafted from interview notes; Useful for non-experts, tight deadlines or ideation
Campaign management	Excel tracker of production and sign-off	Auditing value; automates synthesis across sources and documents everything. Risks over-engineering and repeating mistakes
Research and briefing	AI-assisted background research & synthesis	Integrate form responses, internal Sharepoint material from reports and public sources: requires expert interview for verification
Writing and editing	Drafting and summarising support in Copilot	Zero creativity but useful for reference, ideation or for non-writers; must be carefully fact-checked by writer and expert
Visual content	AI visuals used for ideation and design briefs	Can introduce gimmicky or off-brand visuals; suggested - use as last-resort; original photography always preferred
Governance and enablement	Draft communications AI guideline out for input	Practical training, disclosure practice and escalation route tbd

AI streamlines the mechanical parts of communication work, but AI access across CSIR means more human capacity in communications needed for oversight and final execution

Key barriers, risks, capability gaps and enabling requirements for successful AI adoption and implementation

Key barriers, risks, gaps and what we need

Close the capability gaps, manage the accuracy and brand risk, and agree the open decisions

Barriers, risks and capability gaps



Low adoption and uneven AI literacy in communications; most practical experience sits with a small number of practitioners.



Accuracy and credibility: AI can invent facts, quotes and detail, and an error in public-facing content damages CSIR credibility.



Brand and visual risk: researchers generate their own images and slides, producing off-brand material and visuals with inaccurate geography or unrealistic scientific scenes.

Enabling requirements and open decisions



Approved tools and access: use of AI outside Copilot risks exposing unpublished, client or confidential CSIR information to the open web; ICT input needed on Copilot licensing and personal accounts.



Practical training for communications and researchers, plus agreement from brand and management on whether AI visuals stay ideation-only and who approves them first.



Portfolio guidelines for public-facing content: a brand review route for AI visuals, a disclosure practice, handling of AI-assisted drafts from clusters, and a clear escalation path.

Final thoughts

- Audience perceptions
- Human creativity and job satisfaction
- Gen AI is a pattern recognition machine



Thank you

