



Task-specific AI assistants for public service

1. What are task-specific AI assistants?

Task-specific AI assistants are AI tools you can configure to carry out a clearly defined job using instructions, examples and approved reference material.

Different platforms use different names for these tools, including:

- OpenAI (ChatGPT): Custom GPTs
- Anthropic (Claude): Projects
- Google (Gemini): Gems
- Microsoft: Copilots or Copilot extensions

The underlying idea is the same. Instead of a general-purpose chatbot, you create a focused assistant that understands a specific task, your tone and your rules.

1.1 Why use them?

General models are useful, but task-specific ones are more reliable for repeat work. They know your policies, your templates and your acronyms, and importantly, they know your style and tone. For example, asking a general model to write an email can produce something quite generic. A model you've trained to write emails in your tone and style will produce a much better result, a lot quicker. They can save time on admin, help analyse information and support more consistent, higher-quality outputs. Done right, they reduce noise and raise standards.

1.2 Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Set a narrow, clearly defined task
- Use only approved, non-sensitive materials

apolitical

- Be explicit about tone, format, and limits
- Tell users when they're interacting with an AI assistant
- Ask for feedback through a clear channel for errors and improvements
- Decide when outputs must be reviewed or escalated
- Train users on what it's for, what it can't do, and why judgement still matters
- Improve it over time by updating knowledge, tone, and examples

Don'ts

- Upload sensitive or personal data
- Assume outputs are neutral or always correct
- Let the assistant make final decisions
- Use it outside the audience or task it was designed for
- Skip testing or ongoing review

2. How to create a task specific AI assistant

1. Set the goal

Decide what your task-specific AI assistant should do. For example, it could help to summarise policy, draft meeting notes, or respond to common queries. Summarise the task clearly:

"Create an assistant that helps caseworkers respond to common benefit queries."

2. Gather approved materials

Provide only what you are allowed to use:

- Policies and guidance
- FAQs
- Templates
- Tone or style guides
- Examples of good outputs

Do not include sensitive, personal or draft material.

gpolitical

3. Define rules and boundaries

Every platform allows some version of this.

Assume the model will test the edges unless you define them, so be explicit about:

- Tone and reading level
- Output formats
- What to avoid
- When to escalate to a human
- What it must say it can't do, for example giving legal advice, making final decisions, or handling cases requiring human judgement

4. Test, break and refine

- Share it with a small group.
- Actively try to make it fail.
- Fix what breaks.
- Document what it is and isn't for.

Sources

- <https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.01291>
- <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8554397-creating-a-gpt>
- https://help.openai.com/en/articles/9358033-key-guidelines-for-writing-instructions-for-custom-gpts#h_d6951722f6
- <https://mitsloanedtech.mit.edu/ai/tools/writing/custom-gpts-at-mit-sloan-a-comprehensive-guide/>