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In Partnership with



# “COMMUNITY IN THE LOOP”: ENGAGING AUSTIN RESIDENTS ON AI ACCOUNTABILITY

A lived-experience data Executive Brief



In Partnership with the City of Austin and Austin AI Alliance  
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# EXECUTIVE BRIEF

On November 19, 2025, the City of Austin, led by Ana DeFrates and the Open Government Partnership, in collaboration with Measure and the Austin AI Alliance, hosted Community in the Loop, the first in a three-part citywide convening series designed to bring transparency to municipal AI use and to invite residents to inform how artificial intelligence is considered and discussed across Austin. The event combined high-level AI education, clear city updates, and community-driven data collection using Measure's CARE Model, giving residents both the language and the authority to evaluate Austin's rapidly expanding AI infrastructure.

## EXPERT FRAMING & SHARED UNDERSTANDING

To ensure residents could participate as equal partners, the event began with two foundational knowledge sessions:



[Maurie Beasley, CEO of AI Ed Pro & Board Member, Austin AI Alliance](#)

Maurie delivered a high-level literacy training that:

- Established a shared vocabulary around artificial intelligence
- Grounded residents in plain-language definitions so everyone could meaningfully interrogate the City's AI practices
- Set a common understanding of opportunities, limitations, and risks

Her training ensured that community participants, regardless of technical background, could analyze, question, and evaluate the information presented.

[Daniel Culotta, Assistant Director of Budget and Organizational Excellence for the City of Austin](#)

Daniel followed with a deep dive into the specific AI systems currently in use across the City, including:

- Prototypes and pilots in wildfire detection, safety equipment, permitting, and IoT
- The structure of the City's internal AI governance
- Results of the ChatGPT Enterprise pilot across 27 departments
- Risks, benefits, and safeguards currently implemented
- The City's alignment with transparency requirements and state-level AI regulations

This transparent and technical walkthrough was one of the most important elements of the evening, giving residents unprecedented visibility into how AI is shaping public services in Austin.

Together, Maurie and Daniel created a learning environment rooted in clarity, accountability, and empowerment, preparing residents to participate in governance rather than simply observe it.



## CITY OF AUSTIN: AI TRANSPARENCY HIGHLIGHTS

The City, (Daniel Culotta) shared a rare and detailed snapshot of its internal AI operations, including:

### 1. AI Safeguards & Governance (Current State)

- City AI Policy & User Guide
- Generative AI Standards
- Privacy/security controls
- AI Risk Addendum to Tech Purchasing Review
- Internal review via Emerging Tech Board
- OGP (Open Government Partnership) accountability track
- Alignment with City Council transparency directives

### 2. City-Wide ChatGPT Enterprise Pilot

- 80 licenses across 27 departments
- 35 daily users, 16 weekly
- Usefulness rating increase: 4.15 → 4.5 out of 5
- Time savings: 4.3 hours/week saved per employee
- Net value per employee: \$7,733.63
- ROI at pilot scale: ~473%
- Use cases: research, summarizing, analysis, writing, automation

### 3. Prototypes & Implementations

- Smart Hand Tools (IoT + AI): safety feedback and improved training
- Wildfire & Smoke Impact Tracking: early warnings and targeted outreach
- Permit Pre-Review: AI-assisted error detection, shorter cycles for applicants

### 3 COMMUNITY TOWNHALLS PLANNED

- NOVEMBER 19, 2025
- MARCH 19, 2026
- MARCH 26, 2026



**Daniel Culotta, Assistant Director of Budget and  
Organizational Excellence for the City of Austin**



## HOW COMMUNITY INSIGHTS WERE GATHERED & ANALYZED

Community feedback was collected through Measure’s CARE Model facilitation, led by Dr. Zameshia Williams, Dr. Gabrielle Wallace, Brittany Merida and Meme Styles. About 75 participants were divided into four stations: Community, Advocacy, Resilience, and Evidence, where they responded to guided prompts using large-format boards and sticky notes.

Following the event, the facilitation team digitized all written input. Measure then used AI-assisted qualitative analysis to rapidly identify recurring themes, cluster insights, and validate patterns across groups. This blend of expert facilitation and AI-assisted synthesis ensured that resident priorities were captured accurately, analyzed systematically, and translated into clear, actionable guidance for the City.

## COMMUNITY FINDINGS USING THE CARE MODEL



**Community**

**Key Insight:** AI governance must be co-governance, and inclusion must reflect Austin’s full diversity.

Residents examined how power-sharing structures can move residents from “consulted” to engaged as contributors to discussions shaping AI policy direction.



**Advocacy**

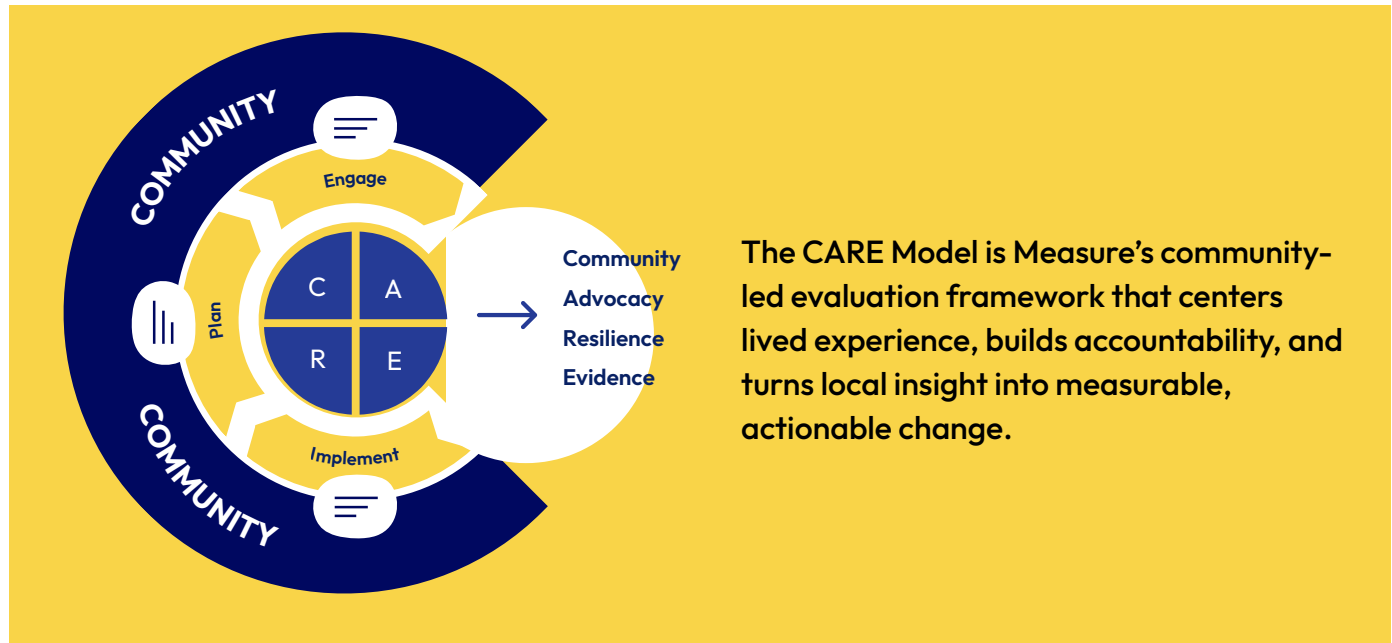
**Key Insight:** Residents emphasized the need for greater transparency and clarity around how AI policies are developed, implemented, and enforced.

Residents discussed how current city safeguards lack legal or procedural teeth, highlighting the need for codified protections that guarantee community safety.



**Dr. Zameshia Williams, Chief of Research +  
Dr. Gabrielle Wallace, Director of Research  
at Measure**

## COMMUNITY FINDINGS USING THE CARE MODEL



**Resilience**

**Key Insight: Accountability must be measurable, visible, and continuous.**

Residents assessed how expectations map onto concrete mechanisms, like audits, feedback loops, and human oversight, that ensure ongoing public visibility and policy-driven standards.



**Evidence**

**Key Insight: Trust grows through openness, humility, and accountability.**

Residents looked at how transparent communication and the honest acknowledgment of AI limitations create stronger, more resilient public trust.

COMMUNITY FINDINGS USING THE CARE MODEL

<p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>Who should be involved in AI decisions?</p>	<p><b>ADVOCACY</b></p> <p>What rights or safeguards do residents need?</p>	<p><b>RESILIENCE</b></p> <p>How can AI strengthen trust?</p>	<p><b>EVIDENCE</b></p> <p>What does accountability look like?</p>
<p>Residents insisted on broad, inclusive participation, naming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOAs</li> <li>• School districts</li> <li>• Business associations</li> <li>• Chambers</li> <li>• Religious leaders</li> <li>• Residents (all)</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Government agencies</li> <li>• Underserved communities</li> </ul>	<p>Residents prioritized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Accuracy</li> <li>• Opt-out options</li> <li>• Environmental protections</li> <li>• Mental health safeguards</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Equal access</li> <li>• Protections from harm</li> </ul>	<p>Top trust-builders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admitting uncertainty</li> <li>• Transparent data sources</li> <li>• Bias reduction</li> <li>• Regular audits</li> <li>• Accessible design</li> <li>• Strong feedback loops</li> <li>• Keeping humans in decision-making</li> </ul>	<p>Residents defined accountability as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent procurement</li> <li>• SMART goals</li> <li>• Human oversight</li> <li>• Error prevention</li> <li>• Public audits</li> <li>• Clear ownership</li> <li>• Real-time updates</li> <li>• Digital/media literacy</li> </ul>
			

## IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS

Community in the Loop demonstrated that communities want to engage with the city and that they don't just deserve a voice in AI governance, they can improve it. With expert grounding from Maurie Beasley, deep system transparency from Daniel Culotta, and Measure's community-centered approach, Austin is pioneering a future where AI serves people, not the other way around.

### 1. A Model for Community-Centered AI Governance

Residents served as co-governors, shaping expectations for transparency, fairness, and shared accountability.

### 2. National Significance

Few cities have paired expert education, full-system disclosure, and community-led data collection. Austin is a national leader in participatory AI governance.

### 3. Data for Policy, Research, and Future Convenings

Insights from this event will drive:

- A Measure Black Paper through a RWJF-funded research project.
- Ongoing updates to Austin's AI governance
- 2026 Community in the Loop sessions (March 19th and 26th)
- Advocacy for state-level AI protections



This executive brief was developed with editing support from AI-assisted writing tools to enhance clarity and organization.



# ABOUT OUR DATA ACTIVISTS



## **MEME STYLES**

Meme Styles is the President and Founder of Measure, an award-winning social justice nonprofit that uses research and data to advance equity. With over 15 years of experience in leadership, research, and community organizing, she leads initiatives that empower communities to turn lived experience into data-driven solutions for systemic change.

A Just Tech Fellow with the Social Science Research Council and Chairwoman of HBCU AI Con, Meme is leading important work around artificial intelligence and racial equity. Her work focuses on interrogating AI systems to ensure technology is ethical, transparent, and does not reinforce structural racism.



## **DR. ZAMESHIA WILLIAMS**

Dr. Zameshia Williams leads with data, heart, and purpose.

As Chief of Research at Measure, she advances community-rooted research, strategic evaluation, and ethical data practices. A proud Dallas native with over 19 years in education, advocacy, public policy and administration, Dr. Z has led grassroots campaigns, supported legislative advocacy on Capitol Hill, and crafted research that centers the voices of historically underserved communities. She believes data should see people, honor people, and work for people.

**This project was made possible through the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Measure’s Data Activists are serving as the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator as they interrogate artificial intelligence using the Measure CARE Model.**