

# Getting started **with AI.**



A practical guide for mutual banks exploring the value of AI – without the buzzwords.

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## **Why AI and why now?**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries around the world. For mutuals, it offers new ways to enhance member experience, improve decision-making, and streamline operations. But alongside the opportunity, there's hesitation - and rightly so.

With limited resources, evolving regulation, and a strong commitment to purpose, many customer-owned banks are asking:

- Where should we start?
- What's worth investing in?
- How do we manage risk and stay true to our values?

This guide is built to help you begin. No jargon. No pressure. Just practical insights to help you take the first step with confidence.

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## **What AI really means for mutuals**

- Make better decisions from your data
- Automate repetitive processes
- Improve how you serve your members

## **Importantly, it is not**

- Improve how you serve your members A replacement for your people
- A guaranteed quick win
- One-size-fits-all

AI can be as simple as an algorithm that spots trends in loan applications, or a tool that helps identify fraud patterns. For mutuals, the key is to focus on meaningful, manageable use cases that create value for your people and your members.

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## **So, where do you start?**

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## Six questions to ask before you begin

- 1. What problem are we trying to solve?**  
Start with a real challenge or opportunity - not a tech trend.
  - 2. Do we have the right data to support it?**  
AI is only as good as the data behind it. Quality, structure and access matter.
  - 3. What impact will this have on our members?**  
Member trust is critical. Will this improve their experience or create new risks?
  - 4. Are our teams ready for the change?**  
People need time, support and clarity to adopt new tools.
  - 5. What ethical or regulatory risks do we need to manage?**  
Start thinking early about fairness, explainability, and privacy.
  - 6. Are we prepared to test and learn?**  
AI success rarely happens all at once. A pilot mindset is key.
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## Practical starting points for Mutual Banks

You don't need to build a full-scale AI strategy from day one. Here are some safe, practical entry points that can deliver early value.

Use case	Why it fits
Automated reporting	Reduces manual workload and improves data accuracy for compliance and insights
Member segmentation	Enables more tailored communication and service delivery
Eligibility pre-screening	Supports more consistent and efficient loan processing
Call centre insights	Identifies member needs and sentiment trends
Fraud/risk pattern detection	Improves risk management and early intervention

**Start small. Test. Learn. Grow.**

**The goal isn't perfection - it's progress with purpose.**

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## How Escient helps you explore safely

At Escient, we partner with mutuals to help them understand and apply AI in a way that fits their scale, culture and purpose.

Our approach:

- **Discovery-led:** We start with your needs, not a tech stack
- **Collaborative:** We work alongside your team to uplift capability
- **Right-sized:** No over-engineered frameworks or jargon
- **Risk-aware:** Governance, transparency and member impact come first

We can help you:

- Identify viable, low-risk use cases
- Assess your data and organisational readiness
- Design pilots that are safe, meaningful and measurable
- Develop policies to manage ethical and regulatory risk

We make AI practical, purposeful, and human.

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## Next Steps

AI isn't all or nothing. Every step you take to build understanding and capability is a step toward future readiness.

**Here's what you can do now:**

- Let's chat – connect with the team at [contact@escient.com.au](mailto:contact@escient.com.au)
- Download our checklist: *Is this a good AI use case for us?*

Let's explore what AI could mean for your organisation.