

Practical AI Prompts and Tools for Program Planning

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is meant to help seniors' centre staff and volunteers use AI with greater confidence in the day-to-day work of developing programs, and it highlights useful tools for each stage of the process.

1) Planning: Generating a program idea and shaping the basics

Recommended AI Tool – Perplexity – <https://www.perplexity.ai/>

Perplexity is especially useful for early-stage research. It can scan online sources, surface current examples, and help staff quickly explore which programs seem most popular or relevant. In this stage, it helps generate a program idea and begin shaping key details, such as who the program is for, what it involves, when and where it could run, what it may cost, and whether registration should be required.

Important Feature: Enable “Pro Search” mode (3 free queries per day)

Starting Prompt

Based on 2025-2026 examples from across Canada, what are five popular programs running at local recreational senior centres that are fun, and socially active?

What This Can Help You Produce

- identify program ideas that already seem to be working in other centres
- narrow a broad idea into a more specific concept
- begin thinking through structure, format, and participant experience
- gather early planning details that can support internal discussion

For example, once the idea of a bridge-and-euchre hybrid program emerges, AI can help staff think through how the sessions might be structured, whether players rotate between games, what skill levels should be supported, how long each session should be, and whether the program works best as a drop-in or a registered series.

Tips for Better Results

- **Be specific about the type of program and audience.** Add details such as the size of the seniors' centre, whether the program is recreational or educational, and the types of participants you want to attract. The more context you give, the more relevant the examples will be.
- **Ask for results in a comparison format.** For example, ask Perplexity to present ideas in a table with headings such as program name, target audience, cost, staffing needs, and why it works. This makes the output easier to scan and compare.
- **Use follow-up prompts to narrow the idea.** Once you see promising examples, ask more specific questions about format, length, supplies, volunteer support, skill levels, or drop-in versus registered delivery. Better planning often comes from a second or third prompt, not just the first.
- **Tell the tool what kind of practicality you want.** If you need something low-cost, easy to run, social, beginner-friendly, or suitable for limited staff support, say so directly in the prompt. This helps the tool generate ideas that are more realistic for everyday use.

Staff still need to decide whether the idea fits their members, available space, budget, and overall program goals.

2) Promotion: Turning program details into clear communication

Recommended AI Tool – Canva – <https://www.canva.com/>

Canva is useful for creating participant-facing promotional materials once the program details are clear. At this stage, it can help staff turn a program idea into a visually appealing, easy-to-understand flyer or poster. It can also support related promotional content by giving staff a strong visual starting point that can be reused across other channels.

Important Feature: Use the “Canva AI” free tool

Starting Prompt

Create a promotional poster to advertise a new program for anyone interested in playing Euchre and/or Bridge in a weekly recreational seniors’ centre club. Program details included below:

Shuffle & Social: Bridge and Euchre Club

Join us for a fun and welcoming weekly card club at Bintville Seniors Centre! Whether you're a novice or experienced player, enjoy coffee and conversation before choosing a bridge or euchre table - with the option to switch games throughout the season. The program runs on Wednesdays from 12:30-3:30 PM starting March 4, 2026. It's free to play, with snacks and beverages costing just \$3. To register, RSVP by calling 555-5555 or emailing info@bintville.ca

What This Can Help You Produce

- create a promotional poster or flyer with a clear visual layout
- generate a strong visual starting point for public-facing communication
- turn written program details into a format that is easier to share and display
- support promotion of the same program across different channels

For example, once the bridge-and-euchre program details are confirmed, Canva can help staff quickly create a polished, readable poster that can be adapted for use on a bulletin board, in a newsletter, or in an online event listing.

Tips for Better Results

- **Include the audience and tone in the prompt.** Say who the poster is for and how it should feel, such as welcoming, social, beginner-friendly, or easy to understand. This helps Canva generate a design style that better matches the program.
- **Be clear about the format you want.** If you want a poster, flyer, square social graphic, or event image, say so directly. Canva AI works better when it knows the kind of promotional piece you are trying to create.
- **Keep the written program description clean and complete.** The better the source text, the better the design. Include the title, short description, time, date, cost, and registration details in a clear format so Canva can build from accurate information.
- **Name important design priorities in the prompt.** If readability matters most, say so. You can also ask for large text, a clean layout, a warm community feel, or a design suitable for older adults. This helps guide the first round of results.

Staff still need to assess whether the final design is accurate, readable, welcoming, and suitable for the people it is intended to serve.

3) Delivery: Supporting day-of coordination and volunteer readiness

Recommended AI Tool – ChatGPT – <https://chatgpt.com/>

ChatGPT is useful for creating the behind-the-scenes communication that helps a program run smoothly. At this stage, it can help staff draft practical internal materials such as volunteer handbooks, staff notes, reminder messages, checklists, and day-of guidance.

Starting Prompt

Please act like a seasoned volunteer management professional who has worked for over 25 years with older adult recreation centres across Canada, coordinating strong, motivated volunteer teams. You are a communication specialist who writes in an exquisitely accessible style. We are launching a new program. Details are below. Please draft a concise, friendly volunteer handbook to guide our helpers in running a successful program. Include specific instructions about how each club meeting is organized, including a checklist.

[PASTE PROGRAM DETAILS HERE]

What This Can Help You Produce

- draft a volunteer handbook with clear instructions and expectations
- create a practical checklist for before, during, and after each meeting
- support smoother communication between staff and volunteers

For example, once the bridge-and-euchre club is ready to launch, ChatGPT can help staff create a short handbook that explains the program's purpose, outlines volunteer responsibilities, and shows how each weekly meeting should run from start to finish.

Tips for Better Results

- **Tell the tool exactly who the document is for.** Say whether it is meant for volunteers, staff, or both, and whether the readers are brand new or already experienced. This helps ChatGPT match the right tone and level of detail.
- **Provide the full program flow in the prompt.** Include key details such as arrival time, setup, welcome process, activity timing, cleanup, and wrap-up. The more clearly you describe how the program runs, the more useful and realistic the document will be.
- **Include site-specific instructions in your input.** Add details such as where supplies are stored, who unlocks the room, what to do if participants arrive early, and who volunteers should contact with questions. ChatGPT cannot guess those details, so including them makes the final output much more useful.

Staff still need to review whether the final handbook is accurate, practical, and aligned with how the program will actually run on the day.

4) Follow-Up: Supporting participant communication and feedback collection

Recommended AI Tool – Google Gemini – <https://gemini.google.com/>

Google Gemini can help staff create follow-up materials after a program has launched. At this stage, it can support participant thank-you messages, short recaps, and feedback survey text. This is especially useful when staff want to gather important input without having to build every question or message from scratch.

Starting Prompt

We just launched a successful new program at the Bintville Seniors Centre and want to collect feedback and suggestions from participants using a Google Form. The program details are included below. Please generate feedback survey questions relevant to the program, formatted specifically for use in Google Forms. Questions should be about satisfaction with the program and areas for improvement. Multiple-choice questions are best. One or two open-ended short-answer questions are OK.

[PASTE PROGRAM DETAILS HERE]

What This Can Help You Produce

- generate a mix of satisfaction and improvement-focused questions
- support a more thoughtful follow-up process after a new program launch
- help staff gather clearer feedback for future planning

For example, after the bridge-and-euchre club has been running for a few weeks, Gemini can help staff create survey questions that ask about comfort, pacing, enjoyment, and whether participants would return or recommend the program to others.

Tips for Better Results

- **Tell the tool what kind of feedback you want to learn from.** For example, say whether you want feedback about satisfaction, comfort, pacing, social connection, accessibility, or whether participants would return. This helps Gemini generate more targeted questions.
- **Specify the survey format in advance.** If you want mostly multiple-choice questions, rating scales, or just one or two short-answer questions, say so clearly. Gemini gives better results when the question style is defined up front.
- **Ask for plain-language questions.** Since the survey is meant for participants, it helps to request wording that is simple, friendly, and easy to understand. This can improve the quality of the responses you receive.
- **Ask the tool to group questions by purpose.** For example, you can ask for sections such as overall satisfaction, program experience, logistics, and suggestions for improvement. This makes the final Google Form easier to build and easier for participants to complete.

Staff still need to review whether the final survey questions are appropriate, useful, and aligned with the kind of feedback they genuinely want to collect.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

AI can be a helpful support tool, but a few common mistakes can limit its value. One is being too vague. Short, unclear prompts often yield generic results, whereas more specific instructions usually generate stronger, more useful output.

It is also important not to share private member information or confidential internal content in public AI tools. Staff should be especially careful with names, contact details, personal notes, and other sensitive information.

Finally, avoid using AI in a way that removes human judgment from the process. AI can help generate ideas, speed up writing, and organize information, but it cannot fully understand the people, culture, and day-to-day realities of a seniors' centre. The strongest results come when AI is used to support the work, not replace the thinking behind it.

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