

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board BrainHub – AI Summit 2026

Community Service Project Guidelines

Challenge Overview:

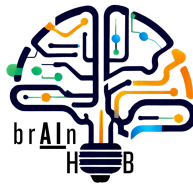
The Brainhub AI Summit 2026 planning committee invites students enrolled at any Western North Carolina (WNC) higher education institution (see **Eligibility** below) to harness the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create meaningful solutions for real community problems. Participants will have until May 8, 2026, to identify a community need, develop an AI-enhanced solution, and submit required documentation of their journey from concept to project implementation. Participants may be selected to present at the 2-day summit and will be notified by May 26.

Eligibility:

- Participants can be individual students or teams of up to five members.
- You and all members of your team must be enrolled and taking at least one class at an institution (college, university, or community college) in WNC between January and May 2026.
- Institutions must have a campus location in one of the following counties served by Land of Sky to qualify:
 - Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Catawba, Gaston, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey

Project Requirements:

- I. **Community Focus:** Projects must address a genuine community service need and cannot be primarily commercial in nature. Examples include:
 - Adapting existing civic projects from platforms like [Code for America](#)
 - Creating new solutions for local challenges (e.g., improving public transportation usability, supporting community wellness initiatives, leveraging public data to provide new insights for regional planning and governance, addressing environmental concerns, etc).
 - Enhancing access to public services or information
 - Supporting underserved populations in your community
- II. **AI Usage:** All projects must incorporate and document the use of AI in some capacity. Further, the project must demonstrate how AI can potentially help us identify and solve problems facing our community. Potential uses of AI as a methodology could include: analyzing data, conducting research, identifying problems, making recommendations, designing and creating software, designing physical objects or devices, and any other creative use as long as the use is clearly documented.
- III. **Project Deliverables:**



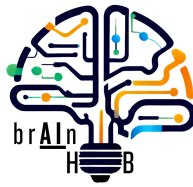
The Project Submission (in PDF format) must include the following elements:

- 1. Project Summary Narrative (minimum 1,000 words)-** must address the following elements:
 - a. Statement of Purpose:** what is addressed; why does it matter; who does it impact and how; what outcomes are you aiming to achieve?
 - b. Project Selection Rationale:** how was the problem identified; what research was conducted; were community members and others consulted; why this initiative?
 - c. AI Integration - Planned Approach:** What AI did you propose to use? How would it help solve or address the problem? What alternatives were considered?
 - d. AI Integration - Actual Implementation:** Which AI systems and key prompts and queries did you use? How did AI prove more effective than traditional approaches? Did you test or verify the accuracy of AI-generated content, outputs, or predictions? How accurate did you find the AI outputs to be?
 - e. Technical Approach and Innovation:** Why is your approach or solution unique or creative, and is it realistic, effective, and responsible? Did you clearly explain how AI tools or methods are used?
- 2. Project Journey Documentation:** Provide a detailed written account covering milestones, setbacks and challenges, and successes and learnings
- 3. Supplemental Media:** Include one of the following to demonstrate your project:
 - a. Demonstration video (maximum 5 minutes) showing your solution in action
 - b. Digital poster or infographic explaining your project visually
 - c. Website or app walkthrough with screenshots and explanations
 - d. Presentation slides detailing your approach and results

**All media must be linked within the PDF submission or embedded appropriately*
- 4. Ethical Considerations:** All projects must demonstrate responsible AI use, including:
 - Transparency: Clear explanation of how AI makes decisions in your solution
 - Human oversight: Appropriate human involvement in AI-driven outcomes
 - Privacy: Protection of any user data collected or processed
 - Fairness: Consideration of how your solution impacts different community groups
 - Safety: Assessment of potential risks or unintended consequences

Submission Guidelines:

- A. Certification of Originality:** Each submission must include a signed statement certifying that:
 - The overall project is original work created by the team members
 - All AI tools, platforms, and external sources are properly cited
 - Any adapted or borrowed code, data, or concepts are attributed
 - The work complies with all ethical guidelines
- B. Format Requirements**
 - Single PDF document



- Maximum 50 MB file size
- Maximum 10 pages in length
- 12-point font or larger
- All external media are linked within the document

***** Deadline: May 8, 2026 - noon *****

Questions? info@brainhub-contest.org

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on the criteria below, with prizes awarded to 3 selected projects.

Community Impact (40%)

- Significance and relevance of the problem addressed
- Potential for meaningful community benefit
- Evidence of community engagement or stakeholder input

AI Innovation and Application (30%)

- Effective and appropriate use of AI technologies
- Creativity in applying AI to the problem
- Technical sophistication and feasibility of the solution
- Responsible and ethical use of AI
- Transparency about AI's role and limitations
- Attention to fairness, privacy, and safety

Project Execution / Completeness (20%)

- Quality of implementation and development
- Ability to overcome challenges and setbacks
- Progress towards completion

Documentation and Communication (10%)

- Clarity and thoroughness of the written narrative
- Quality and effectiveness of supplemental media
- Reflection on learning journey and outcomes