VELNORO

Citizen Development Operating Handbook

A Complete Playbook for CoE Leaders

For CoE leaders, program managers, governance leads, enablement specialists, and the organizations they serve

Version 2.0

2026 Edition

By Velnoro

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is written for the people responsible for building, running, and scaling a citizen development program: CoE leaders, program managers, governance leads, enablement specialists, and the organizational sponsors who champion this work at the executive level.

Think of it as a living operating manual, not a one-time read. Different sections will matter more at different stages of your program:

- **Just getting started?** Begin with Sections 1–3 to align on purpose, principles, and your operating model.
- **Setting up governance?** Sections 4–6 cover platform architecture, risk management, and the intake process.
- **Building your maker community?** Section 7 on enablement and training is your primary reference.
- **Reporting to leadership?** Section 8 gives you the KPI framework and measurement model.
- **Planning ahead?** Sections 9–10 address AI governance, multi-tool complexity, and the 36-month maturity roadmap.

A Note on Platform Coverage

This handbook is intentionally platform-agnostic. The governance structures, operating processes, and enablement frameworks apply whether your organization uses Microsoft Power Platform, Mendix, OutSystems, ServiceNow App Engine, Salesforce Platform, Appian, or any combination. Where specific platform concepts are referenced for illustration, the pattern translates directly to other tools.

Contents

SECTION 1

Program Purpose and Principles

1.1 Why Citizen Development

The gap between what business units need and what IT can deliver has never been wider. IT backlogs grow, manual workarounds multiply, and employees reach for unsanctioned tools because they have no better option, creating the shadow IT that drives every CIO's risk exposure.

Citizen development is the structured answer. By equipping business technologists with approved platforms, guardrails, training, and a community of support, organizations can dramatically accelerate digital capability while actually reducing risk. The evidence is consistent:

- **Forrester TEI (2024):** 206% ROI over three years for well-governed Power Platform programs, with a 6-month payback period
- High-impact citizen developers save approximately **250 hours per year** through automation and self-service tooling
- Gartner projects citizen developers will outnumber professional developers **4:1**, with 70% of new enterprise applications using low-code/no-code
- Organizations with structured IT-business collaboration deliver outcomes **25% faster**

Citizen development is not about replacing IT. It is about safely extending software creation to business experts who understand their processes deeply but historically lacked the tools and guardrails to act on that knowledge.

1.2 Core Program Objectives

- Reduce IT backlog for appropriate use cases by creating a governed, faster delivery path
- Shorten time-to-value for internal workflow improvements, automation, and self-service tooling
- Empower business experts to experiment and build within safe technical and compliance boundaries
- Convert shadow IT into governed solutions by offering a better, sanctioned alternative
- Improve data quality, process consistency, and auditability versus ad hoc spreadsheets and unmanaged tools
- Build organizational digital capability that compounds over time through community, skills, and shared assets

1.3 Guiding Principles

These seven principles apply regardless of which platforms are in use. They serve as the north star when decisions get hard.

- **1. Business-led, IT-enabled.** Business owns outcomes; IT owns platforms, security, and guardrails.
- **2. Guardrails, not gates.** Controls are risk-based and right-sized. Low-risk work flows quickly. Death by checklist kills programs.
- **3. Tiered everything.** Permissions, governance, ALM, and support scale with risk. One heavy process for all work is the fastest route to shadow IT creation.
- **4. No orphans.** Every solution has an accountable owner, a documented purpose, and a decommission plan.
- **5. One front door.** All demand flows through a shared intake mechanism. But it must be easy enough that people actually use it.
- **6. Platform-agnostic patterns.** Operating processes refer to approved platforms and workspaces so tools can evolve without rebuilding governance from scratch.
- **7. The governed path is the easiest path.** If the sanctioned route requires more effort than the unsanctioned one, governance has failed. Design for adoption, not compliance.

The Seventh Principle

The governed path must be the easiest path. If it is harder to do things the right way than the wrong way, governance will be circumvented. Every process, tool choice, and policy decision should be tested against this principle. It is the single most reliable predictor of whether a citizen development program will sustain adoption.

SECTION 2

Day-0 Setup: Decisions and Charter

2.1 Scope Definition

Before launching, define explicitly what types of work are in scope for citizen development and what must always route through professional development. This prevents scope creep and gives makers and business stakeholders clear expectations from day one.

Scope decisions should align with your organization's risk appetite and regulatory environment. Revisit them at each semi-annual governance review.

In Scope	Out of Scope
Internal workflow apps, approval routing, notifications, data capture forms, and team dashboards	Customer-facing products, public websites, and core transactional / ERP systems
Departmental automation, non-regulated analytics, simple reporting, and SaaS integrations using approved connectors	Regulatory reporting (SOX, clinical), PHI/clinical data systems, and safety-critical controls
HR onboarding, operations checklists, and internal process improvements	Multi-system orchestration with major revenue, compliance, or cross-enterprise risk

2.2 Program Charter

A concise 2–3 page charter, approved during the first week, sets the foundation for everything that follows. It should cover:

- **Problem statement:** IT backlog, shadow IT, manual processes, lack of digital capacity in business units
- **Vision:** how governed citizen development addresses those problems and supports strategic priorities
- **Objectives:** quantified targets for backlog reduction, time-to-market, automation hours, and employee engagement
- **Scope:** in/out categories as defined above
- **Governing principles:** those in Section 1.3
- **Operating model:** initial centralized CoE with stated intent to evolve to hybrid as practices mature
- **Governance posture:** risk-based guardrails from day one, not retrofitted after an incident
- **Success metrics:** high-level KPIs across innovation, governance, and business impact

2.3 Executive Sponsorship

Programs with active executive sponsorship and clear organizational accountability consistently outperform grassroots-only efforts. Prosci's benchmarking data across 4,000+ organizations shows projects using structured change management are nearly 7× more likely to meet objectives. This is not optional; it is the single strongest structural predictor of program longevity.

Active sponsor responsibilities:

- Articulating strategic intent and aligning citizen development with enterprise priorities
- Allocating resources and budget for platforms, CoE staffing, and training
- Championing the program with peers and communicating major milestones
- Resolving cross-functional blockers beyond the CoE's span of control
- Reviewing metrics and holding teams accountable for outcomes
- Publicly celebrating citizen developer achievements to maintain visibility and momentum

Always Identify a Backup Sponsor

The primary sponsor is typically the CIO, CTO, or a business unit VP. But single-sponsor programs are fragile. Name a backup sponsor who can champion the program during transitions, and ensure the charter explicitly assigns both roles.

2.4 Change Management Approach

Citizen development adoption is fundamentally a change management challenge, not a technology deployment. The recommended approach blends three proven frameworks:

- **Kotter structures the program:** Build urgency with shadow IT data and IT backlog evidence. Form a guiding coalition of IT leadership, business champions, and executive sponsors. Generate short-term wins in the first 90 days. Kotter's research shows 75% of leadership must buy in for sustained momentum.
- **ADKAR guides individuals:** Use Prosci's 1–5 scale to diagnose where each stakeholder group is stuck. Awareness gaps need different interventions than Knowledge or Ability gaps. Tailor communications and training accordingly.
- **Bridges addresses the emotional transition:** Acknowledge that adopting new tools means letting go of familiar ones. The Neutral Zone between old and new ways of working is exactly when shadow IT proliferates most aggressively. Provide extra coaching, support, and patience during this phase.

The Shadow IT Amnesty

Consider launching with a 30–45 day amnesty period during which teams can declare unsanctioned tools and spreadsheets without consequences. This surfaces the real scope of shadow IT, identifies candidates for migration into the governed program, and builds trust by demonstrating that the CoE is here to help, not punish. See Section 5.4 for the full conversion strategy.

SECTION 3

Operating Model and Roles

3.1 Organizational Models

Three archetypes recur across successful citizen development programs. Evidence strongly favors a staged evolution rather than choosing one from the start.

Model	When to Use It
Centralized CoE: single team owns all standards, governance, and enablement	Early-stage programs; regulated industries; organizations needing consistent control
Federated CoE: multiple business-aligned CoEs under shared principles	Large or diversified enterprises; when domain expertise and speed outweigh consistency risk
Hybrid: central team owns standards; business units host local Champions	Mature programs scaling past initial success; organizations with proven CoE practices

Universally recommended progression: start centralized, prove ROI, mature governance practices, then evolve to hybrid as capacity grows. Transition triggers include the CoE becoming a demand bottleneck, business units demonstrating certified-maker competence, and growing perception that the CoE is too far from day-to-day operations. Do not skip the centralized stage; establishing best practices before distributing responsibility is where programs earn the right to scale.

3.2 Minimum Viable CoE

A minimum viable CoE for a mid-market organization (500–5,000 employees) typically includes 3–5 core roles, often with part-time allocation early on. A lean CoE that moves beats a fully staffed one that has not launched.

Role	Core Responsibilities
CoE Lead / Program Manager	Vision, roadmap, stakeholder management, steering updates, budget, reporting
Platform / Tooling Admin	Workspace management, access control, integrations, security config, licensing
Governance and Compliance Lead	Guardrail design and enforcement, reviews, audits, exception handling
Training and Enablement Lead	Curriculum, training coordination, office hours, documentation, community

Role	Core Responsibilities
Business Liaisons / Fusion Leads	Embedded in key departments: translate business needs, prioritize intake, champion adoption

3.3 RACI Patterns

Define a RACI matrix for each recurring governance activity. Without explicit ownership, reviews stall and accountability gaps emerge.

Activity	CoE Lead	Platform Admin	Gov/Compliance	Training	Biz Owner
Define risk tiers and review criteria	A	C	R	C	C
Review solution design and data usage	C	C	R	C	R
Security and integration checks	C	R	R	I	C
Approve / reject promotion	A	C	R	I	C
Communicate decision and next steps	R	I	I	C	C
Update catalog and reporting	R	C	C	I	I

Also define RACIs for: approving new tools or connectors, running hackathons, managing incidents involving citizen solutions, and handling governance exceptions.

SECTION 4

Tool-Agnostic Platform Architecture

4.1 Environment and Workspace Strategy

All major low-code and automation platforms support logical separation of work: environments, workspaces, projects, spaces, or tenants. The CoE must define a workspace strategy that creates the right structure for governance without unnecessary complexity.

Workspace	Purpose and Access Rules
Admin / CoE Workspace	Monitoring, inventory, policies, automation assets, shared components. CoE members only.
Personal Sandboxes	Individual experimentation and training with non-sensitive data. All makers; auto-provisioned.
Department Dev Workspaces	Building and testing departmental apps and automations. Builders and Champions; CoE-provisioned.
Shared Test / UAT	Cross-team testing prior to production promotion. Builders, testers, and reviewers.
Production Workspaces	Live solutions only. Strict access controls, logging, and change management required.

Microsoft’s own internal practice confirms this pattern: in their Personal Productivity environment, standard connectors (Teams, SharePoint) require no additional permissions. In the Pro Dev environment, Dataverse connectors require explicit permission requests. Governance is delivered through architecture, not process.

4.2 Approved Toolset and Usage Policy

Formally define your approved toolset and document expectations for each tool. For each, specify: who may use it (by persona and tier), what environments exist, what data classifications and connectors are permitted, and any licensing considerations.

Clear written guidance is the first step toward consolidating shadow IT into sanctioned platforms. Without it, makers make their own decisions, and they will.

SECTION 5

Governance and Risk Management

5.1 The Guardrails, Not Gates Mindset

The consensus across analyst firms and practitioners is clear: governance that feels like bureaucracy kills programs. The goal is enough structure for security and compliance without destroying the speed and creativity that make citizen development valuable.

> **What Good Governance Looks Like**
>
> Personal productivity apps use standard connectors and publish directly to the maker's workspace with no additional review. Departmental solutions go through a lightweight CoE review focused on data access and support planning. Enterprise-critical solutions follow formal ALM with IT partnership. The governed path is faster than the ungoverned alternative at every tier.

5.2 Risk Tiers

A three-tier risk model assigns the right level of governance to each solution. This is the single most important structural decision in your governance design.

Tier	Scope	Governance Level
T1: Personal / Team Productivity	Low impact, small audience, non-sensitive data, no critical dependencies	Fast path: automatic approvals within personal sandboxes or team workspaces
T2: Departmental	Department-scale users, some process or data risk	CoE review required before production. Basic documentation and testing.
T3: Enterprise / Critical	Cross-department scope, regulated data, or high business impact	Formal architecture review, structured testing, collaboration with IT

Tier assignment is based on three factors: data sensitivity, user count / scope, and business criticality. Document the criteria for each tier so assignments are consistent and defensible. Shell's zone framework provides a proven implementation: Green Zone (full DIY), Amber Zone (partnered DIY with coaching), Red Zone (professional IT-led development).

5.3 Data Classification and Connector Policy

Define a connector and integration policy classifying each as: allowed (self-service), restricted (review required), or blocked. Apply consistently across all approved platforms so the same data rules govern

regardless of which tool is used.

Data Level	Citizen Dev Access
Public	Freely usable in citizen apps, including external-facing where appropriate
Internal	Allowed in citizen solutions within sanctioned tools and workspaces; standard connectors
Confidential	Tier 2+ environments only, with stricter review and logging; restricted connectors require approval
Highly Confidential / Regulated	Prohibited for citizen solutions: pro-dev or regulated systems pathway required

5.4 Shadow IT Conversion Strategy

Frame citizen development as your primary strategy to convert shadow IT, not suppress it. Suppression without an alternative creates resentment and drives workarounds further underground. Research shows shadow IT accounts for 30–40% of IT spending at large enterprises, and 83% of employees choose alternate apps even when a sanctioned option exists.

- Inventory existing unsanctioned tools, spreadsheets, and workflows through regular platform audits and the amnesty process described in Section 2.4
- Classify each by data sensitivity and business criticality
- For low-risk cases: migrate into approved platforms and celebrate the transition publicly
- For higher-risk cases: plan managed refactors or decommissioning with the business owner
- Always position the governed stack as the path of least resistance: pre-configured templates, self-service environments, built-in compliance, and instant feedback make the governed path faster than the shadow alternative

SECTION 6

Intake, Triage, and Delivery Lifecycle

6.1 The Single Front Door, and When NOT to Use It

Every citizen development program needs a single intake path: a shared mechanism where teams submit ideas and requests for CoE review and routing.

But here is a design principle that is easy to get wrong: the intake form is not for everyone who wants to learn or experiment. It is specifically for people who have identified a real business problem and are ready to pursue a solution through the program.

> **Intake Is for Solutions, Not Exploration**
>
> The front door intake process is for people who have identified a real business problem and want CoE support to route it to the right delivery path. People who want to learn, experiment, or explore should have a separate, friction-free path to sandbox environments, training resources, and community channels. Requiring intake for exploration is the fastest way to discourage the experimentation that builds future makers.

The intake process accomplishes three things: routes work to the right delivery path, gives the CoE visibility into demand, and ensures minimum documentation before resources are committed. It should take no more than 5–10 minutes to complete.

6.2 Intake Form Fields

Keep the form as short as possible while capturing what you genuinely need to triage. Every field you add is friction. BJ Fogg's Behavior Model confirms: reducing friction is more effective than increasing motivation. Only include a field if it would actually change the routing or review decision.

Field	Why It Matters for Triage
Request title and 2–3 sentence problem description	Establishes context for routing decision
Department, business owner, primary contact	Identifies accountability before work begins
Who will use this and approximately how many people	Informs risk tier and delivery path
What data is involved: simple sensitivity checkboxes	Flags early if Confidential or Regulated data is present
Current tools and workarounds in use today	Identifies shadow IT conversion opportunities

Field	Why It Matters for Triage
Desired outcome and what success looks like	Anchors scope and provides measurement basis
Hard deadlines or regulatory/audit drivers (optional)	Informs priority and escalation needs

Notably absent: lengthy technical specifications, full business cases, ROI calculations, or architecture diagrams. Those come later, for the appropriate tier, not as entry barriers.

6.3 Triage and Routing

On submission, the CoE performs a quick triage, ideally within 1–2 business days, and routes to one of four delivery paths. Where possible, auto-routing logic based on intake responses should suggest the initial path:

Path	When to Use It
Citizen-built	Suitable for a trained maker working within guardrails. Often T1 or low T2.
Fusion team	Requires collaboration between business experts and IT/pro-dev. Typically T2–T3.
Pro-dev	Too complex or high-risk for citizen development. Enters a traditional IT delivery pipeline.
Non-build	The problem is better solved by configuring an existing tool, buying a SaaS product, or refining a process.

6.4 Delivery Lifecycle

Stage	Core Activities
1. Discover and Define	Clarify the problem, outcomes, success metrics, and data involved
2. Design and Prototype	Draft flows or interfaces quickly; validate with future users
3. Build and Test	Develop iteratively; conduct unit and integration tests in dev workspace
4. Review and Approve	Run through the appropriate tier checklist; CoE or peer review
5. Deploy and Monitor	Release to production; configure monitoring for errors, usage, and performance
6. Operate and Evolve	Maintain, enhance, or refactor as user needs change over time
7. Retire	Decommission when replaced or obsolete; archive or migrate data

6.5 Tiered ALM

Application lifecycle management requirements scale with risk tier:

- **Tier 1 (Minimal):** Lightweight patterns for personal/team apps. Informal versioning, simple backups. No formal change records required. Direct publish from maker workspace.
- **Tier 2 (Structured):** Department-specific sandbox, basic solution packaging, peer review and basic UAT. Manual export/import between environments. Source control recommended.
- **Tier 3 (Formal):** Separate dev/test/prod environments. Managed solutions only in production. Formal UAT and integration testing. Automated CI/CD pipelines via Azure DevOps or GitHub Actions. Required Git-based version control. Solution Architecture Board review.

The fundamental ALM challenge for citizen development is whether ALM can scale *down*, not up: making lifecycle management accessible to citizen developers without requiring them to step outside their maker experience.

SECTION 7

Enablement, Training, and Community

7.1 The Coaching Multiplier Effect

Enablement investment, not just platform licensing, determines program outcomes. Organizations that treat training as a one-time onboarding step and then leave makers to figure things out consistently underperform.

> **4× Improvement From Coaching Alone**
>
> Globe Telecom's citizen development program reported a 4× improvement in maker productivity when structured coaching was added to platform training. The improvement came not from advanced technical skills but from guided problem decomposition, pattern matching to existing solutions, and confidence to ship.

7.2 Competency Tiers and Personas

Platform access rights must be explicitly mapped to these tiers and enforced in your environment configuration, not just documented in a policy document that no one reads.

Tier	Who They Are	Access Rights	Responsibilities
Explorer	Curious business users in training mode	Personal sandbox; non-sensitive data only	Follow guidelines; stay in sandbox scope
Builder	Trained makers who have completed intermediate curriculum or equivalent	Dept dev workspaces; T1 and T2 solutions via CoE review	Document solutions; complete reviews; support adoption
Champion	Advanced builders with a proven governance compliance track record	Broader access; limited production build rights	Mentor others; contribute to CoP; help define patterns

7.3 Training Curriculum Framework

The 70-20-10 model provides the architecture: 70% learning from hands-on building solving real business problems, 20% from social interactions (peer mentoring, communities, coaching, office hours), and 10% from formal training (certifications, workshops).

- **Foundations:** Program purpose, guardrails, what is in and out of scope, how to get support

- **Platform basics:** Building apps, flows, dashboards, or workflows in each approved tool
- **Data literacy:** Tables, relationships, basic queries, APIs, and what data classification means in practice
- **Security and compliance:** What non-specialists need to know, simplified, applied, relevant
- **Design thinking and UX:** How to understand user needs and build things people actually use
- **Agile and product thinking:** Backlogs, iterations, feedback loops, knowing when to stop building

External certifications (PMI Citizen Developer Foundation/Practitioner/Business Architect, vendor certs) can be mapped to internal tiers and used as promotion criteria. Tie credentials to tangible privilege upgrades so investment in skills has a visible payoff.

7.4 Coaching and Office Hours

- Scheduled weekly or bi-weekly office hours staffed by CoE members or Champions
- Ad hoc design reviews for makers planning their approach before building
- Structured pairing: new makers partnered with experienced builders on their first 1–2 projects
- Async support channels in Teams, Slack, or equivalent, staffed by Champions with CoE oversight

7.5 Community of Practice

A community of practice sustains momentum after initial launch energy fades. This is where programs live or die at the 6–18 month mark. Wenger's seven principles for cultivating communities provide the framework, and the critical insight is that three-tier participation (core, active, peripheral) is healthy: expecting all members to be core contributors guarantees burnout.

- Dedicated channels for Q&A, announcements, and sharing wins
- Regular meet-ups or virtual calls with demos and lessons learned, monthly at minimum
- Internal app gallery or solution catalog to showcase proven, reusable solutions
- Quarterly hackathons or themed innovation challenges to spark new ideas
- Recognition programs that celebrate Champions and high-impact makers publicly
- Periodic new-cohort launches to maintain fresh energy and expand the talent base

Continuous improvement cadence: monthly community meetings and office hours, quarterly formal program reviews covering metrics and bottlenecks, semi-annual governance and platform strategy reviews, annual full program refresh with executive reporting.

Leading Indicators of Community Decline

Watch for declining attendance at events, fewer questions in support channels, shrinking core contributor ratio, over-reliance on 2–3 Champions for all activity, and lack of new cohort launches. These are leading indicators; by the time they show in deployment metrics, the community may need significant reinvestment to rebuild.

SECTION 8

Measurement and KPIs

8.1 Why Track Three Dimensions

Programs that track only activity metrics can look healthy on paper while governance deteriorates and business value is unclear. Programs that track only governance miss the innovation outcomes executives care about. Measure all three simultaneously and include all three in every executive report.

Automate reporting wherever possible through platform telemetry and CoE dashboards. Manual reporting is a CoE capacity tax; invest in automated data collection early.

Category	Metric	Target / Benchmark	Cadence
Innovation	Active citizen developers	1 per 20–30 knowledge workers	Monthly
Innovation	Apps / automations deployed	30+ within first 6 months	Monthly
Innovation	Departments engaged	Growing trend; all core BUs by month 12	Quarterly
Innovation	Time-to-deploy vs. traditional IT	50–90% faster	Quarterly
Innovation	Time-to-first-app for new makers	Under 30 days from training	Monthly
Governance	Policy compliance rate	>90%	Monthly
Governance	Shadow IT conversion rate	Increasing trend	Quarterly
Governance	Security incidents in citizen solutions	Decreasing; near-zero	Monthly
Governance	Governed vs. ungoverned apps ratio	>80% governed	Monthly
Impact	Hours of manual work automated	Cumulative; show growth	Quarterly
Impact	IT backlog items redirected	50%+ reduction target	Quarterly
Impact	Maker and end-user satisfaction	>4.0 / 5.0 surveyed	Quarterly
Impact	App reuse and sharing rate	Increasing trend	Quarterly

8.2 Shell’s Zone Framework for Governance Health

Shell’s three-zone framework provides a clean model for measuring governance health alongside innovation activity:

- **Green Zone:** Full citizen developer ownership. Standard connectors, non-sensitive data, Tier 1 scope.
- **Amber Zone:** Citizen developer partnered with a coach or IT advisor. Tier 2 scope with some complexity.
- **Red Zone:** Professional development only. Regulated, critical, or enterprise-scale.

Tracking the distribution of your portfolio across zones over time reveals whether governance is improving and whether makers are operating within appropriate boundaries.

SECTION 9

Multi-Tool and AI Considerations

9.1 Multi-Tool Environments

Most organizations run multiple low-code, automation, and AI platforms in parallel. Different tools genuinely serve different use cases well. The CoE's job is to make this manageable and prevent fragmentation, not to force standardization on a single platform.

- Maintain a reference architecture showing where each tool fits and which use cases it is best suited for
- Define primary and secondary tools for common scenarios to reduce decision fatigue
- Harmonize governance by applying the same data classification, risk tiers, and permission models across all tools
- Provide migration guidance when solutions grow beyond the capabilities of their original platform
- Use cross-platform discovery tooling to maintain visibility across all environments, not just the primary platform

9.2 AI Copilots, Agents, and Generative Builders

AI-assisted development, including natural language prompting that generates apps, flows, or agents, is lowering the barrier to entry dramatically. This creates governance blind spots that traditional processes were not designed to handle.

> **The 2,500% Defect Warning**
>
> Gartner's Predicts 2026 report warns that prompt-to-app development approaches will increase software defects by 2,500% by 2028. The answer is not banning AI tools; it is extending existing governance frameworks to cover AI-generated artifacts with the same rigor applied to manually built solutions.

Governance for AI-assisted building:

- Dedicated AI sandboxes with restricted data access and limited connector sets for experimentation

- Prompt and pattern libraries encoding safe, approved ways to request automations and agents
- Human review requirements before any AI-generated artifact reaches production
- Responsible AI considerations in policy: data usage, bias, transparency, and safety
- Specific agent approval workflows that account for the action-triggering nature of agentic solutions
- AI-specific validation: hallucination testing, fact grounding validation, and semantic similarity scoring
- Allocate 30–40% of AI development project time to testing, validation, and review

AI Governance Extends Existing Frameworks

Copilot Studio and similar AI builders produce the same artifact types as manual development: apps, flows, agents, and dashboards. They should be subject to the same risk tiers, data classification, and review processes. AI governance is not a separate discipline; it is an extension of the governance framework you have already built.

SECTION 10

36-Month Maturity Roadmap

The organizations achieving the strongest ROI share a consistent pattern: they started centralized, invested in governance and enablement infrastructure, demonstrated value through disciplined measurement, and scaled deliberately. Premature scaling before foundations are solid is one of the most common failure modes.

Phase	Key Outcomes and Milestones
Phase 1: Plan and Pilot (Months 0–6)	Charter, sponsor, and minimum viable CoE in place. Approved platforms configured with tiered workspaces. First pilot cohort trained. First wave of solutions deployed and measured. Governance framework documented.
Phase 2: Expand (Months 6–12)	Community of practice established and active. Tiered governance fully implemented with documented review processes. Shadow IT amnesty completed. Multiple business units participating. Champion network forming.
Phase 3: Federate (Months 12–18)	Hybrid model with business-aligned mini-CoEs and Champions under central governance standards. Advanced ALM for Tier 3 solutions. AI governance framework in place. Automated compliance monitoring operational.
Phase 4: Optimize (Months 18–36)	Citizen development treated as a standard part of the digital delivery model. Adaptive governance with automated enforcement. Continuous improvement driven by data. Cross-platform visibility and management.

Governance evolves with maturity: pilot-phase governance is intentionally light. Expansion-phase governance becomes structured with enforced DLP and formal approval workflows. At enterprise maturity, governance becomes adaptive: automated enforcement, self-service for low-risk work, AI-assisted monitoring.

Common Failure Points

KPMG found 73% of organizations adopting low-code have not defined governance rules. Other common failures: premature scaling before governance maturity; single-sponsor dependency; under-investing in enablement and community; measuring only activity without governance health or business impact; and deferring governance to “Phase 2” when it should be lightweight from day one.

SECTION 11

Operational Templates and Checklists

The checklists and field references below are designed to be adapted to your organization's context. Fillable versions of selected templates are available at velnoro.com/guides.

11.1 Day-0 Readiness Checklist

- Executive sponsor and named backup confirmed
- Program charter drafted and approved
- Minimum viable CoE roles defined and staffed, even partially
- Approved platforms and tool usage policy documented
- Environment / workspace strategy documented
- Data classification and connector policy drafted
- Governance principles, risk tiers, and tier criteria defined
- Single intake mechanism designed and communicated
- Sandbox / exploration path designed separately from intake
- Shadow IT amnesty planned or in progress
- Initial training and communication plan prepared
- Change management approach selected and communicated

11.2 App Review Checklist (Tier 2: Departmental)

- Business case and owner documented
- Risk tier confirmed and appropriate delivery path selected
- Data sources and integrations reviewed and approved
- Access model defined: who can view, edit, and administer
- Testing completed in non-production workspace
- Support plan in place: who handles user issues and minor changes
- Monitoring configured: error alerts and basic usage tracking
- Documentation stored in standard repository with owner and creation date
- Decommission trigger defined: what conditions would retire this solution

11.3 Intake Form Field Reference

Field	Purpose
Request title and problem description (2–3 sentences)	Establish context for triage routing
Department, business owner, primary contact	Identify accountability before work begins
Who will use this and approximately how many people	Inform risk tier and delivery path
What data is involved: sensitivity checkboxes	Flag early if Confidential / Regulated data is present
Current tools and workarounds in use today	Identify shadow IT conversion opportunities
Desired outcome and what success looks like	Anchor scope and provide measurement basis
Hard deadlines or regulatory/audit drivers	Inform priority and escalation needs

11.4 Maker Tier Guidelines

Tier	Entry Criteria	Access Rights	Responsibilities
Explorer	Completed foundations training	Personal sandbox; non-sensitive data only	Follow guidelines; stay in sandbox scope
Builder	Intermediate training or platform certification	Dept dev workspaces; T1 and T2 solutions via CoE review	Document solutions; complete reviews; support adoption
Champion	Proven track record; governance compliance; CoE endorsement	Broader access; limited production build rights	Mentor others; contribute to CoP; help define patterns

SECTION 12

Adapting This Handbook

This handbook provides the operating patterns, governance structures, and enablement frameworks that apply across platforms and organizational contexts. It is designed to be adapted, not followed verbatim.

Create tool-specific annexes for each approved platform, covering how to implement guardrails, configure environments, set up monitoring, and manage ALM in that specific product. Annexes reference this handbook as the base operating model.

Revisit and update this handbook at each semi-annual governance review. The citizen development landscape moves quickly: AI capabilities, platform features, and organizational needs all evolve.

The Five Non-Negotiables

Across all analyst research, vendor guidance, and practitioner experience, five elements appear in every successful citizen development program:

1. **Executive sponsorship with real authority**
2. **Risk-based governance from day one**
3. **Structured enablement beyond one-time training**
4. **A community of practice that sustains momentum**
5. **Measurement across innovation, governance, and business impact**

Everything else can be adapted to context. These five cannot be skipped.

References

Bridges, W. (2009). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 3rd ed. Da Capo Press.

Fogg, B.J. (2020). *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Behavior Model applied to intake design.

Forrester Research (2024). "The Total Economic Impact of Microsoft Power Platform." Commissioned study documenting 206% ROI over three years with 6-month payback.

Gartner (2024). "Gartner Forecasts Worldwide Low-Code Development Technologies Market to Grow 20% in 2025." Projection of 4:1 citizen-to-professional developer ratio.

Gartner (2025). "Predicts 2026: Software Engineering." Warning that prompt-to-app approaches will increase software defects by 2,500% by 2028.

Globe Telecom. Internal citizen development program data documenting 4x productivity improvement from structured coaching versus self-directed learning.

Kotter, J.P. (2012). *Leading Change*, revised ed. Harvard Business Review Press. 75% leadership buy-in threshold for sustained change momentum.

KPMG (2024). "Low-Code/No-Code Adoption and Governance Survey." Finding that 73% of organizations adopting low-code have not defined governance rules.

Prosci (2024). "Best Practices in Change Management", 12th ed. Benchmarking across 4,000+ organizations showing structured change management is nearly 7x more likely to meet objectives.

Shell. Three-zone governance framework (Green/Amber/Red) for citizen development program health tracking. Referenced in multiple industry analyses.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Harvard Business School Press. Seven principles and three-tier participation model.

ABOUT VELNORO

The Operating Layer for Citizen Development Programs

We built this handbook based on the same research that guides our product. Every section describes an operational practice that is genuinely useful on its own, and that becomes dramatically easier with the right tooling.

Velnoro provides automated discovery, governance dashboards, health scoring, connector policy monitoring, and executive reporting for citizen development programs.

The practices in this handbook answer the question "what should we do." Velnoro answers the question "what is actually happening" across your entire tenant, every day, without manual effort.

If you are building or running a citizen development program, we would like to help.

Start your free 30-day trial

velnoro.com