

Supporting effective use of AI in the life sciences

Insights from an Australian national consultation

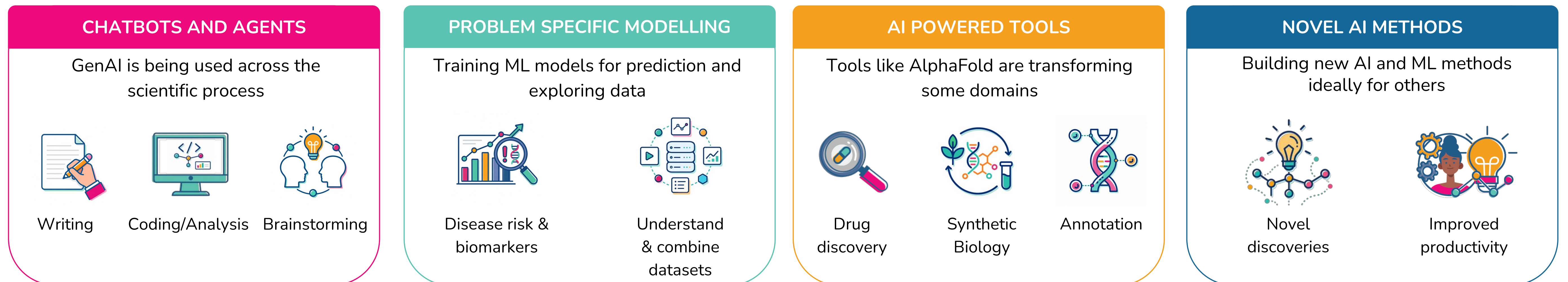
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Almost everyone is using AI

What do Australian life scientists want from AI? To answer this question, Australian BioCommons asked the community about how they are using AI, their challenges and skills needs. How and why AI is being used in the life sciences varies between individuals and domains. A diverse mix of tools are being used for a variety of applications. There is wide variation in skills and confidence and a range of feelings were shared from frustration to cautious optimism and excitement.



Time, unclear policies and access to tools are major barriers

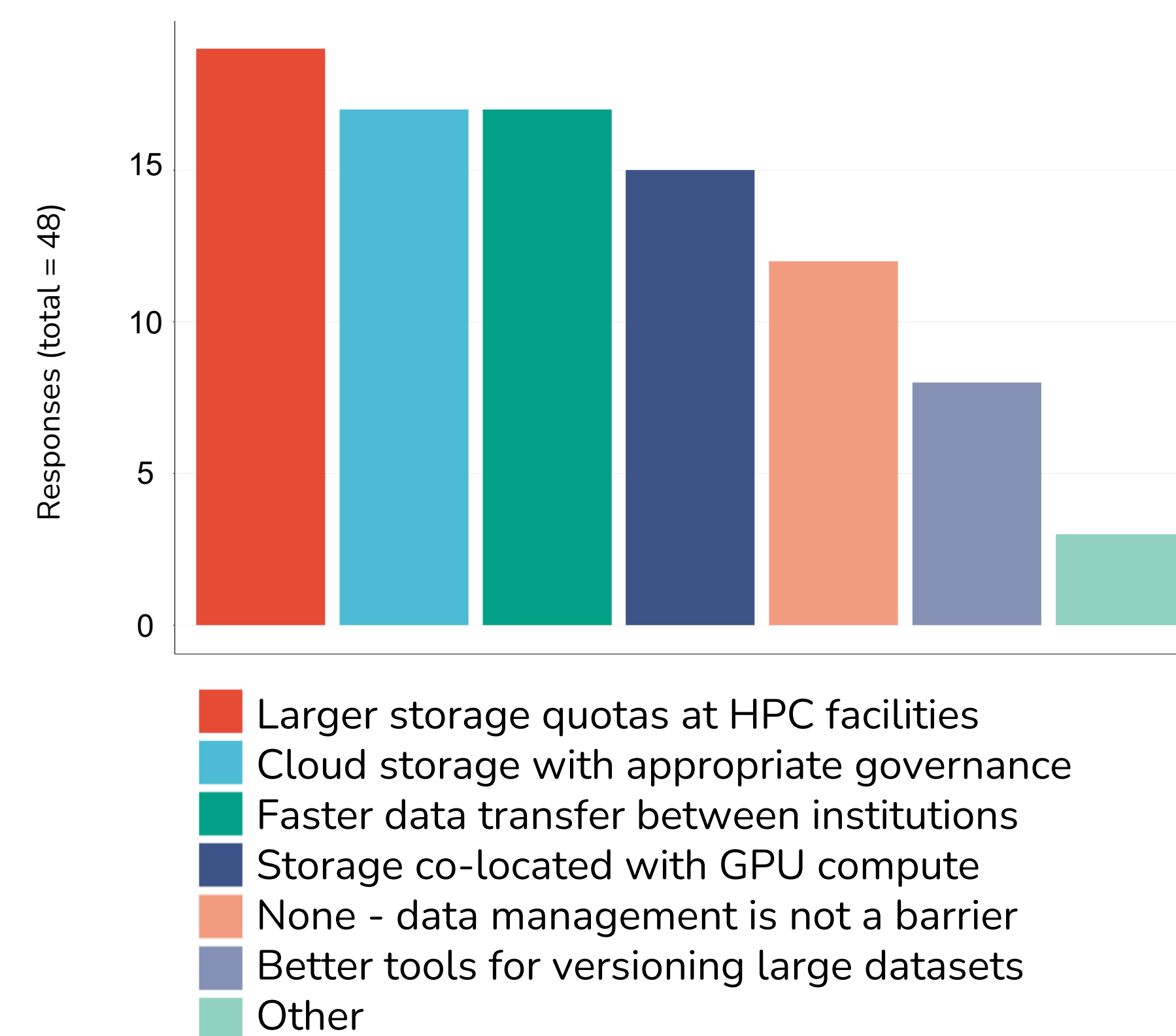
Access to models and compute is not enough - skills, equity and clear policy are critical. Almost everyone wished for more time and support to navigate this rapidly changing field.

Storage, data movement and GPUs are challenges

Computational challenges of working with large scale data are front of mind for AI users. We are now mapping challenges to use cases to tailor solutions to community needs.



What would help your storage or data management needs?

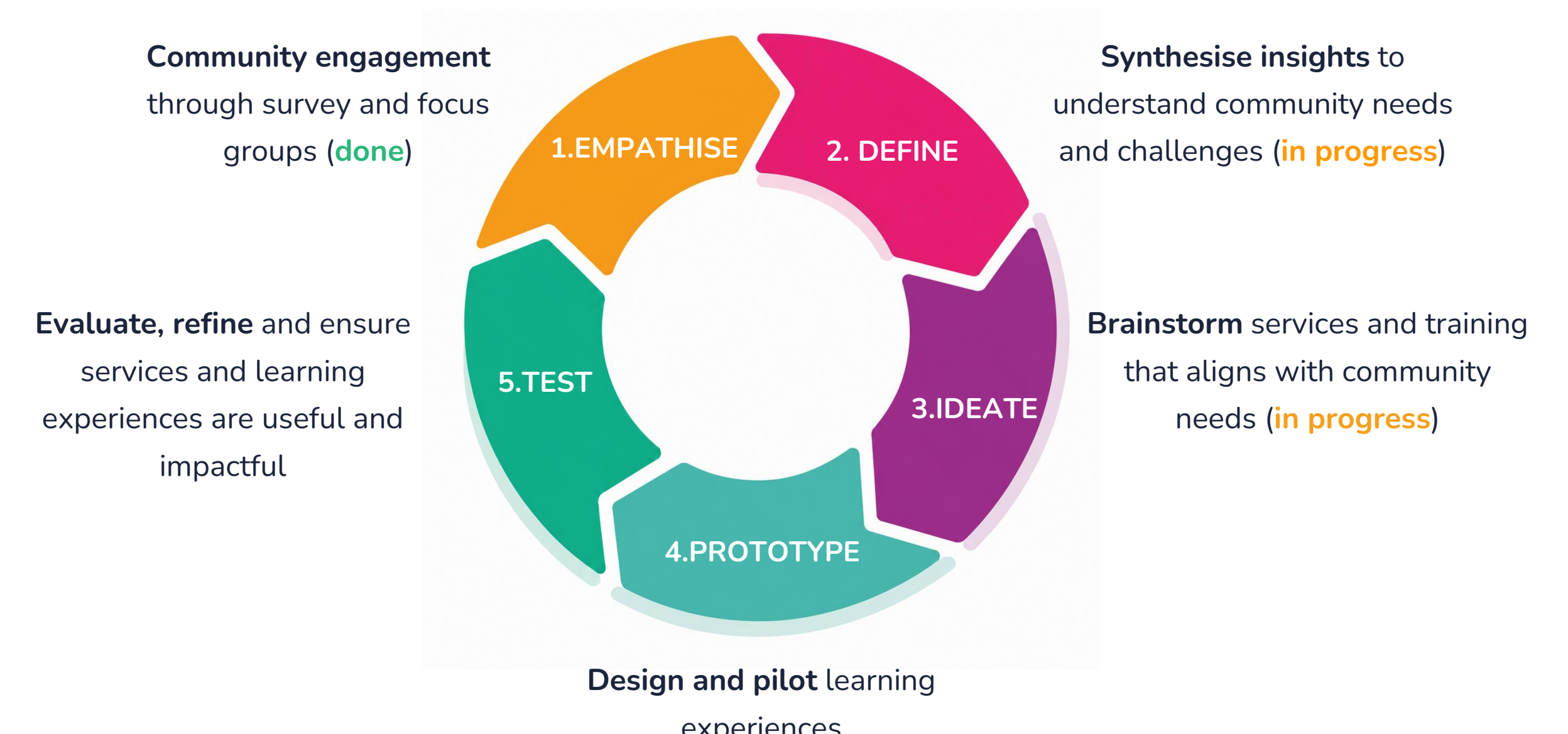
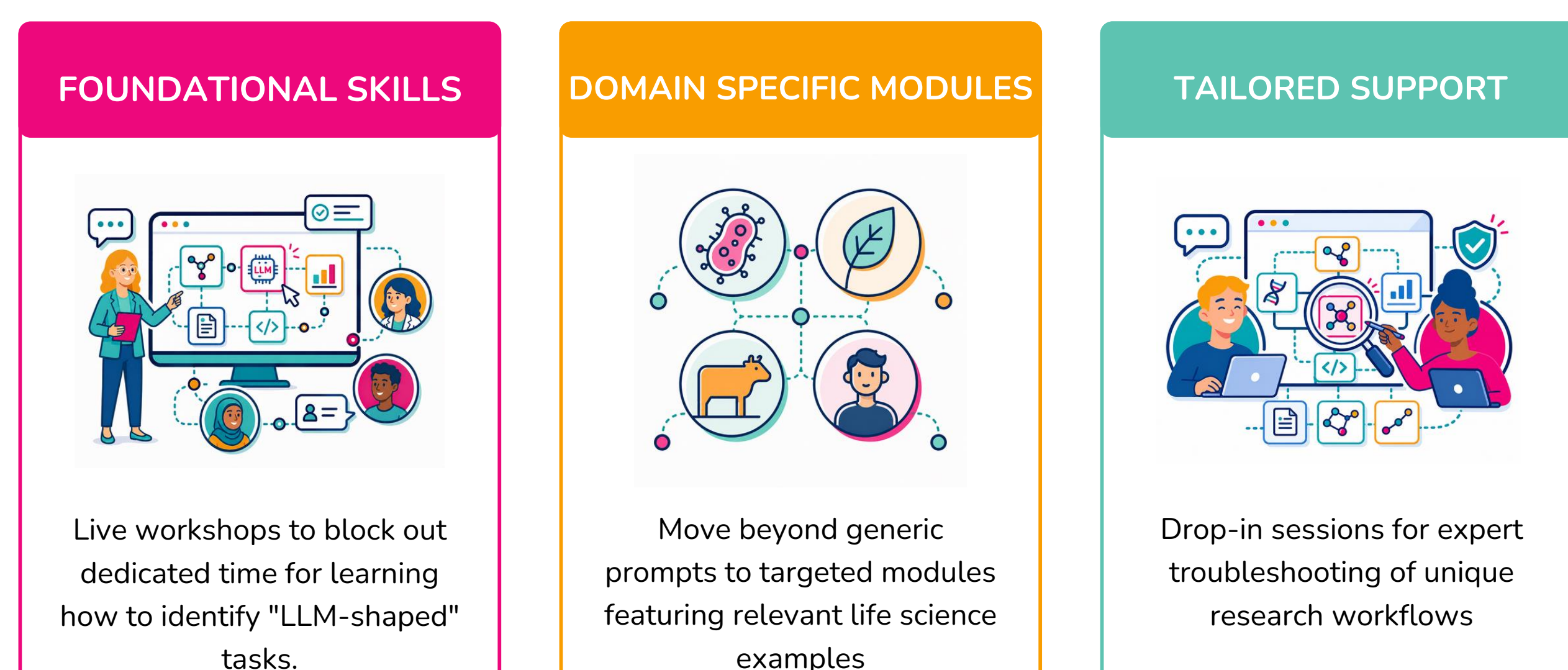


Skills and connection matter

A range of skills are needed to make the most of AI advances. Learning takes time and is better when contextualised. People are social, curious and value the chance to talk to experts and peers about their AI approaches.

What BioCommons is doing

We are already responding to community needs through **AI training** and **smoothing access to tools** such as AlphaFold via Galaxy Australia. The outcomes of these consultations will shape BioCommons future AI activities and are part of a design thinking approach.



Methods and find out more

Australian BioCommons ran a national survey and series of focus groups in March and April 2026 to find out how the community is using AI, learn more about their challenges and explore skills need. These consultations focused on AI in the broadest sense from chatbots to machine learning and developing novel methods. We heard from PhD Students, Postdocs, Bioinformatics support staff and Senior Researchers across a variety of domains. Total survey responses = 60. Total focus group participants = 18 (across 5 sessions). Watch our webinar for more about the design and results of these consultations.

