

Lab 4: AI Conversation Log — Workflow Mapping and Solution Design

Jordan Blake (Instructor Example) | SE 395-2 | October 8, 2026

Student	Jordan Blake (Instructor Example)
Date	October 6, 2026
AI Tool Used	Claude 3.5 Sonnet
Partner Organization	Sunrise Community Kitchen
Workflow	Weekly meal distribution coordination

This document shows a complete AI conversation log for Lab 4. It covers how the student used AI across the full lab: structuring the cold reality, building the recipe, running the Claude interview, and drafting the proposal seed. The strongest logs show the student thinking alongside the AI, not just asking it to generate content.

PHASE 1: STRUCTURING THE COLD REALITY

EXCHANGE 1: ORGANIZING RAW NOTES

MY PROMPT

I need help organizing my notes from our partner visit and class observations into the four-question framework from Lab 4. Here is what I have so far, pretty rough:

Sunrise Community Kitchen. Maria runs it, she is the only paid person. They serve about 200 families a week. Every Monday she gets a PDF from the Central Florida Food Bank with what is available that week. She reads through it and figures out what goes where. Then she has this big Google Sheet with all the families, their sizes, dietary stuff. She builds a distribution plan from that. Takes her hours. Wednesday she emails volunteers, maybe 15-20 of them, with who does what on Thursday. Thursday is distribution day, volunteers pack and hand out bags. After that Maria counts what is left and sends a report to the food bank and United Way by Tuesday.

The big problems: the manifest does not always match what shows up. Sometimes 30% less produce than listed. Volunteers don't always confirm, she chases them by text and phone. The tally at the end is rushed and not super accurate. If Maria is out, nothing happens. Nobody else knows the spreadsheet or the families well enough.

Can you help me organize this into the four questions: (1) where does data come

from, (2) what do they do to it, (3) what leaves and who gets it, and (4) where are the handoffs?

AI RESPONSE

Here is your information organized into the four-question framework:

- 1. Where does data come from?** Food bank manifest PDF (Monday email), family profile Google Sheet (200 rows), volunteer contact list (15-20 people), post-distribution hand tally.
- 2. What do they do to it?** Maria categorizes manifest items (~90 min), builds distribution plan by hand (2-3 hours), emails volunteer assignments + chases responses (45 min + 1-2 hours), counts leftover inventory (~1 hour).
- 3. What leaves?** Distribution bags to 200 families. Summary report to food bank and United Way.
- 4. Handoffs?** Food bank to Maria (manifest), Maria to volunteers (assignments), volunteers to families (bags), volunteers to Maria (tally), Maria to funders (report).

Three questions: Is the manifest a digital PDF or scanned? Does Maria use formulas in the Google Sheet or is she typing cell by cell? How does she collect volunteer tally counts: paper slips, verbal?

EXCHANGE 2: FILLING IN DETAILS

MY PROMPT

Good questions. Let me fill in:

The manifest - I actually have not seen it myself. Maria described it as a PDF the food bank emails every Monday. I do not know if it is scanned or digital. I need to ask for a sample.

The Google Sheet - she does not use formulas. She scrolls through the families and types in what each one gets based on what is available that week. She sorts by household size sometimes but mostly she just knows the families at this point.

The tally - volunteers call out numbers to Maria at the end of the day and she writes them on a clipboard. Then she types them into an email later. She said the numbers are approximate because everyone is tired and rushing to clean up.

One more thing - volunteer coordination is not just email. Some people only respond to texts, some call her back, some just show up without confirming. She said the email response rate is maybe 60%. The rest she tracks down individually.

AI RESPONSE

Key updates: the manifest format is unknown (flag it). The Google Sheet has no formulas, so Maria is doing pure mental math. The tally is verbal and approximate, with three error opportunities: the count, the relay, and the transcription. Volunteer coordination spans three channels with no tracking system. Maria is the system.

You have enough to write the cold reality. Make sure to include: (1) manifest format is an open question, and (2) tally numbers are approximate by design. Everyone knows they are rough.

EXCHANGE 3: IDENTIFYING GAPS

MY PROMPT

Before I write it up, can you look at what we have and tell me what gaps are still in my description? Things I have not addressed that the four-question framework should cover.

AI RESPONSE

Two gaps stand out:

Gap 1: What happens when the manifest does not match reality? You mentioned that sometimes 30% less produce arrives than listed. But you have not described what Maria actually does when that happens. Does she rebuild the plan on Thursday morning? Does she have a backup plan? Does she call the food bank? This is a workflow step that only triggers under failure conditions, and it probably eats significant time when it happens.

Gap 2: What does Maria do when supply is short across the board? You said the manifest sometimes falls short. But what about weeks when the total available food is just not enough for 200 families at normal portions? Does she reduce everyone's share equally? Does she prioritize certain families? Who decides, and based on what information?

Both of these are "exception path" questions. The normal workflow is clear. The failure modes are where the real complexity lives, and they are usually the hardest to automate because they rely on judgment calls.

Claude caught two gaps I would have missed. I knew the manifest was unreliable but didn't think to write it as a gap. And the "what happens when supply is short" question is exactly the kind of thing I need to ask Maria next time.

PHASE 2: BUILDING THE RECIPE

EXCHANGE 4: FIRST DRAFT OF THE RECIPE

MY PROMPT

OK, I have my cold reality written up. Now I need to build the recipe for the AI-assisted version. Here is my idea:

AI reads the manifest and categorizes the items. Then it cross-references against the family spreadsheet and suggests a distribution plan. AI also drafts volunteer emails and generates the post-distribution report. Maria reviews and approves everything before it goes out. Her time goes from 6-8 hours to maybe 2-3.

Can you help me format this into the recipe structure? I need: ingredients, method (numbered steps), time/serves, and a chef's note about what AI should NOT do.

AI RESPONSE

I can structure that into the recipe format. But your ingredients are vague. "Emails from volunteers" tells me nothing. How many? Over what timeframe? In what format? A recipe ingredient needs to be specific enough that someone could gather it. Think of the difference between "eggs" and "4 large eggs, room temperature." Same idea here. Give me real quantities for each ingredient.

EXCHANGE 5: GETTING SPECIFIC

MY PROMPT

Fair. Let me be more specific:

- Food bank manifest: 1 PDF, arrives Monday by email, 3-5 pages, lists item names, quantities, and categories (format unverified, could be scanned)
- Family profiles: 1 Google Sheet exported as CSV, 200 rows, columns for name, household size, dietary restrictions (medical only, no cultural preferences)
- Volunteer contact list: 15-20 names with email and phone, no single system, some in Maria's phone only
- Previous distribution plans: last 8 weeks of plans in the same Google Sheet (separate tabs), showing what each family received
- Volunteer responses: 15-20 text and email replies over 48 hours, across SMS and Gmail, no centralized inbox
- Maria's review time: 2-3 hours for plan review, volunteer assignment approval, and report sign-off

AI RESPONSE

Much better. One flag: the volunteer contact list being partially in Maria's phone is an ingredient problem. If you cannot export it, AI cannot use it. Also, previous distribution plans reflect Maria's judgment calls, not just formulas. If you use them as training data, AI learns her biases along with her logic.

Your ingredients are ready. Now write the chef's note. What should AI never do in this workflow, and why?

EXCHANGE 6: THE CHEF'S NOTE**MY PROMPT**

Here is my chef's note:

"AI must never decide which families get priority when supply is short. That decision stays with Maria. AI suggestions for portion allocation must be reviewable at the individual family level before Maria approves. Volunteer relationship management (follow-up calls, personal check-ins) stays human."

How does that look?

AI RESPONSE

The first two sentences are strong. The third one is correct but under-explained.

Let me ask you a harder question: why should AI not make the priority call? You need to be able to articulate the reason, not just state the rule. If someone reads your recipe and thinks "but an AI could optimize for nutritional need based on household data," you need an answer ready.

MY PROMPT

Because Maria knows things the spreadsheet does not. Two weeks ago when supply was short, she kept portions full for three families: one that just lost food stamps, one with a new baby, one caring for an elderly parent. None of that is in the data. She makes those calls based on conversations, observations, trust. An AI optimizing on household size and dietary restrictions would distribute evenly and miss the families in crisis.

AI RESPONSE

That is a strong answer. Put it in the chef's note, or at least reference it. The reason matters as much as the rule.

But here is an edge case to think about. Say AI generates the suggested allocation for all 200 families. Maria adjusts the 3 she knows are in crisis. She approves the rest without looking. What happens if the AI's suggestion is wrong for a family Maria does not know well? She would never catch it because her attention goes to the families already on her mind. The AI creates a false sense of coverage for the other 197.

That is a design constraint, not just a policy statement. Your chef's note should address it.

The chef's note is the hardest part to write because it requires me to explain why something should NOT be automated. Claude's edge case question about rubber-stamping the other 197 allocations is now in my recipe as a design constraint.

PHASE 3: THE CLAUDE INTERVIEW

EXCHANGE 7: STARTING THE INTERVIEW

MY PROMPT

[I pasted the Lab 4 interview prompt from the assignment, then my full cold reality (4 questions, ~500 words) and recipe (ingredients, method, time, chef's note, ~300 words). The cold reality covers Maria's Monday-through-Saturday workflow for 200 families: manifest categorization, distribution planning, volunteer coordination, and post-distribution reporting. The recipe proposes AI for manifest parsing, draft allocations with confidence flagging, volunteer response tracking, and report generation. The chef's note states AI must never make priority decisions when supply is short.]

AI RESPONSE

Got it. I have your cold reality and recipe. Let me start.

Your recipe Step 1 says AI reads the manifest PDF. Your cold reality says the manifest is a PDF that the food bank emails. But your ingredients list says "format unverified." Have you actually seen this document? Do you know whether it is a machine-readable digital PDF or a scanned image of a printed page?

EXCHANGE 8: THE MANIFEST FORMAT

MY PROMPT

No, I have not seen it. Maria described it as a PDF but I do not know if it is scanned or digital. I flagged it in the ingredients as unverified. I need to ask for a sample before I can say whether AI can read it reliably.

AI RESPONSE

If the manifest is scanned and OCR fails, Steps 1 and 2 both collapse. You do not have a degraded workflow. You have no workflow. Flag this as a blocking unknown in your proposal seed.

Next: your recipe says AI tracks volunteer responses across email and text. How would AI access the text messages? Are they in an exportable app or Maria's personal SMS inbox?

I assumed the manifest was machine-readable. I have no idea. And the volunteer text messages are probably in Maria's personal phone, which means AI cannot access them without a system change. Two assumptions down in two questions.

EXCHANGE 9: VOLUNTEER TRACKING

MY PROMPT

The texts are on Maria's personal phone. There is no app. She just scrolls through her messages to see who replied. I think the real value here is not tracking the texts themselves but building a checklist: here are the 18 volunteers, 11 replied yes by email, these 7 have not responded yet, call them. The AI does not need to read texts. It needs to track who is missing from the confirmed list.

AI RESPONSE

Better framing. But if the checklist still requires Maria to manually mark who texted, you save her the 45 minutes of email writing and nothing else. The 1-2 hours of chasing is still manual. The expensive part is untouched.

EXCHANGE 10: SUPPLY SHORTAGES AND JUDGMENT

MY PROMPT

You are right, I need to think about that more. Let me move on though because I want to get to the harder questions. Ask me about the chef's note.

AI RESPONSE

Fine. Your chef's note says AI must never decide which families get priority when supply is short. Tell me about the last time supply was short. What did Maria actually do, step by step?

MY PROMPT

Two weeks ago they got about 30% less produce than expected. Maria cut the produce portions for everyone by a little, but for three families she knew were struggling she kept their portions full and gave them extra canned goods to make up for the protein she had to cut. One family had just lost their food stamps, one had a new baby, one was caring for an elderly parent. None of that is in the spreadsheet.

AI RESPONSE

Your chef's note already addresses this, which is good. But I want to test the rubber-stamp constraint you added. You said AI suggestions should be presented in small batches, not as one big list. Walk me through what that actually looks like. Maria gets a screen with 10 families at a time. She reviews the AI's suggestion for each. She adjusts the 3 she knows about. What does she do for the other 7 she does not recognize? Does she actually evaluate them, or does she just hit "next"?

MY PROMPT

Probably just hits next, honestly. Unless something looks obviously wrong. I think the small-batch design helps but it does not solve the problem completely. Maybe the better design is to have AI flag the allocations where it is least confident, like where the data is thin or the family profile is incomplete, and ask Maria to look at those specifically.

AI RESPONSE

That is a stronger idea. Confidence-based flagging puts Maria's attention where uncertainty is highest, not just where the batch boundary falls. Add it to your recipe as a design note. Now let me ask about the report.

EXCHANGE 11: THE TALLY ACCURACY PROBLEM

MY PROMPT

Go ahead.

AI RESPONSE

Your recipe Step 5 says AI generates the report from tally data entered into "a simple form." Your cold reality says volunteers call out approximate numbers while cleaning up and Maria writes them on a clipboard. How confident are you that the tally numbers are accurate within, say, 10%? And has the food bank or United Way ever questioned a report?

MY PROMPT

I do not think anyone has questioned a report, but I also do not think anyone is checking. Maria said the numbers are approximate. She described it as "close enough." The tally is the part she trusts least because everyone is tired and wants to go home.

AI RESPONSE

AI generating a polished report from approximate data just makes bad data look authoritative. But here is something useful: the manifest tells you what came in, the tally tells you what went out. If those numbers do not add up, AI can flag the discrepancy before the report goes out. It does not fix the tally, but it catches obvious errors.

EXCHANGE 12: INTERVIEW SUMMARY

MY PROMPT

OK, I think we have covered the major issues. Give me the summary document with these headings: What they do now. Where AI fits. Where AI does not fit. The biggest risk. Questions I could not answer.

AI RESPONSE

What they do now:

Maria coordinates weekly meal distribution for 200 families. She reads a food bank manifest (90 min), builds a distribution plan by hand from a Google Sheet (2-3 hours), coordinates volunteers across email, text, and phone (45 min + 1-2 hours follow-up), and produces a post-distribution report from hand-counted tallies (1 hour). Total: 6-8 hours per week. If Maria is absent, distribution does not happen.

Where AI fits:

- Manifest categorization, contingent on the PDF being machine-readable (unverified).
- Draft distribution plan, presented with confidence-based flagging so Maria reviews uncertain allocations rather than rubber-stamping a batch.
- Volunteer response tracking as a confirmed-vs-missing checklist, not full communication monitoring.

- Report generation with a manifest-vs-tally cross-check to catch math errors before submission.

Where AI does not fit:

- Priority decisions when supply is short. Maria's crisis awareness is not in the data and should not be.
- Cultural food matching. The spreadsheet has medical restrictions only.
- Volunteer relationship management. Follow-up calls are relationship work, not task reminders.

The biggest risk:

Rubber-stamp review. Even with small-batch or confidence-flagged presentation, Maria will focus on the families she already knows and approve the rest on trust. Errors in allocations for less-familiar families would pass unchecked. This is a UX design problem, not a policy problem.

Questions I could not answer:

1. Is the manifest a digital PDF or a scanned document? The entire first step depends on this.
2. How do volunteer text confirmations get recorded? If they stay in Maria's phone, the tracking checklist requires manual entry.
3. What does Maria do when total supply is insufficient for all 200 families at normal portions? I flagged this as a gap but did not observe it.
4. What is the actual error rate on the hand-counted tally? Has anyone compared tallies to manifest-minus-leftover?

PHASE 4: DRAFTING THE PROPOSAL SEED

EXCHANGE 13: PROPOSAL SEED OUTLINE

MY PROMPT

Now I need to start drafting the proposal seed. The six required elements are: (1) partner and problem, (2) current state summary, (3) proposed solution, (4) SDG alignment, (5) risks and open questions, (6) what we need from the partner. Can you help me outline what goes in each section based on the work we have done so far?

AI RESPONSE

Sections 1-5 you can write from your existing lab work. Section 6 (what you need from the partner) is the one to think through carefully because it defines what you are asking of someone who already works 6-8 hours a week on coordination alone. For SDG alignment, SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is obvious. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) connects to the equitable distribution design.

EXCHANGE 14: PARTNER ASKS

MY PROMPT

Here is my draft for section 6:

What We Need from the Partner:

- A sample manifest PDF so we can test whether AI can parse it
- Access to the family profile Google Sheet (anonymized if needed)
- 30 minutes with Maria to walk through a distribution plan build in real time
- Permission to observe a Thursday distribution
- A sample of volunteer coordination emails from a recent week
- Access to a completed tally sheet and the resulting report

Can you review this?

AI RESPONSE

Six asks for a partner with one paid staff member is overwhelming. Prioritize: which unblocks the most work?

The manifest sample. If the PDF is not machine-readable, your Step 1 collapses. Get that first. It takes Maria 30 seconds to forward an email. Second: 30 minutes watching her build a plan. Everything else can wait until you have something to show her.

Restructure as: "We need two things to get started. (1) A sample manifest PDF. (2) Thirty minutes to watch you build a distribution plan."

Claude helped me see that asking for everything at once would overwhelm Maria. Prioritize: get the manifest sample first because it unblocks the entire technical feasibility question.

PHASE 5: FORMATTING THE REPORT

EXCHANGE 15: ORGANIZING THE TEAM REPORT

MY PROMPT

Last thing. We need to put the full team report together. Here is what we have from each team member:

- Alex did the workflow selection justification and the recipe
- I (Jordan) did the cold reality and the proposal seed
- Priya did the swap test

We need to combine these into one document that flows. Can you suggest a structure and transitions between sections?

AI RESPONSE

Here is a structure that follows the logic of the lab:

1. **Workflow Selection** (Alex) — Why we chose meal distribution coordination. Opens the report by establishing the problem.
2. **Cold Reality** (Jordan) — The four-question description. This is the "here is what actually happens" section.
3. **Swap Test** (Priya) — Would a different tool or approach solve this without AI? Establishes that AI is the right tool, not just a convenient one.
4. **Recipe** (Alex) — The proposed AI-assisted redesign. Flows naturally from "here is the problem" and "AI is the right tool" into "here is what we would build."
5. **Proposal Seed** (Jordan) — The six-section summary. This closes the report by looking forward.

For transitions, keep them to one sentence each. Between cold reality and swap test: "Before designing a solution, we tested whether this problem requires AI at all." Between swap test and recipe: "With AI confirmed as the right tool for the pattern-matching and tracking components, here is the proposed redesign." Do not overthink the transitions. The section headings do most of the work.

EXCHANGE 16: CONSISTENCY CHECK

MY PROMPT

Can you read through the full report draft and check for consistency issues? We each wrote our sections separately so there might be contradictions.

AI RESPONSE

I found two issues:

Timeline contradiction: Your cold reality says Maria receives the manifest on Monday and emails volunteers on Wednesday for Thursday distribution. But Alex's recipe says "AI processes the Thursday delivery manifest." Thursday is distribution day, not manifest day. The manifest arrives Monday. Either Alex mixed up the days or is describing a different manifest. Check with Alex.

Volunteer count mismatch: Your cold reality says 15-20 volunteers. Priya's swap test section refers to "the 12 regular volunteers." These might both be correct (15-20 on the list, 12 who regularly show up) but the reader will see a contradiction. Add a clarifying note in one section or the other: "15-20 volunteers are on the contact list, though Maria considers roughly 12 of them reliable regulars."

Everything else is consistent. The tone is slightly different across sections, which is normal for a team-written report and not worth fixing unless your instructor specifically asks for unified voice.

Using AI for a consistency check across sections written by different team members caught a timeline contradiction none of us noticed. Worth doing every time.