How to Nonprofit AI

Get started using generative Artificial Intelligence AI tools at your nonprofit in a way that matches your mission and values

With Brenda Foster and Carolyn Woodard

CommunityIT Innovators®
Where Technology Meets Mission

Learning Objectives

- Understand the various types of AI.
- Define Ethical AI and why it matters for non-profits.
- Apply the five questions framework to determine alignment with your mission
- Use proven prompting strategies to get evidence-based, factual responses.
- Identify next steps to implement Ethical AI in your organization.

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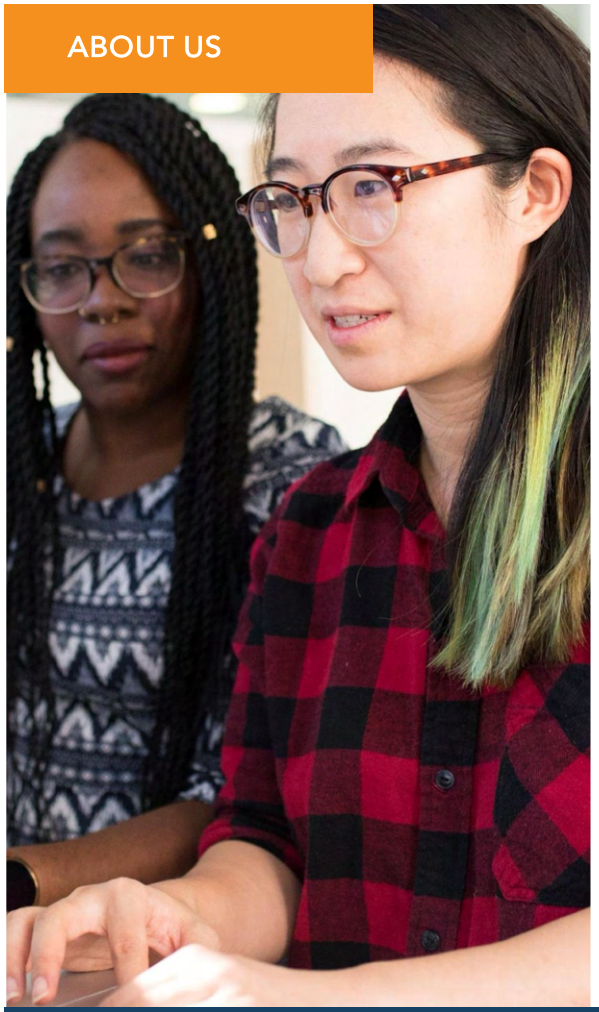
ABOUT US



Advancing mission through the effective use of technology.

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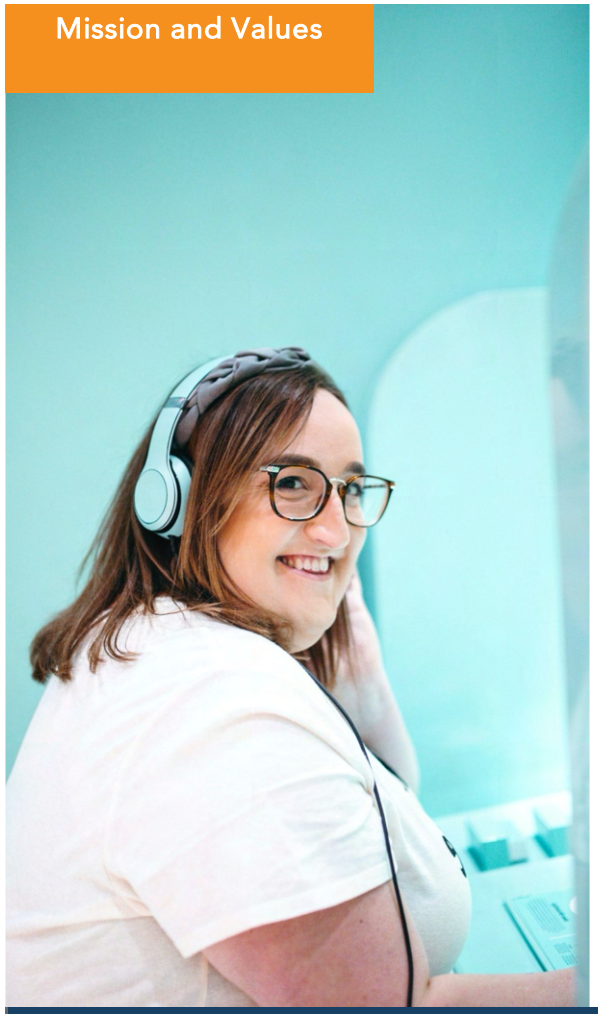
Mission and Values



Mission:

Create value for the nonprofit sector through well-managed IT

Values:

- **Trust**: treat people with respect and fairness
- **Knowledge**: empower staff, clients, and sector to understand and use technology effectively
- **Service**: we seek to be helpful with our talents
- **Balance**: the health of our communities is vital to our well-being; work is only a part of our lives

Poll 1: Your Comfort Level with AI Tools

1. Completely uncomfortable/unfamiliar with most tools
2. Somewhat uncomfortable/use a few popular tools occasionally
3. Neither uncomfortable or comfortable/average use
4. Somewhat comfortable/use a few AI tools daily
5. Completely comfortable/use a lot of tools a lot of the time/colleagues ask me to teach them how
6. Not applicable/other (put in chat!)

AI: Generative vs. Discriminative

Generative AI

Generative AI models are designed to generate new content, such as text, images, or audio, based on patterns in input data. They can be used for tasks like creative writing, art generation, and audio synthesis.

Embedded AI

Embedded AI operates behind the scenes within tools or systems to enhance functionality—without generating new content from scratch. Examples can include Zoom screen enhancements or Google maps suggesting alternate routes.

Discriminative AI

Discriminative AI models are used for tasks like classification, prediction, and decision-making. They focus on mapping input data to output labels or values, rather than generating new content.

AI: The Tradeoffs

AI Concerns

Environment

Per-query water use has declined as newer models have become more efficient, but at scale—700 million GPT-4o queries per day—that still translates into freshwater evaporation equivalent to the annual drinking water needs of 1.2 million people.

University of Rhode Island

AI can optimize agricultural water usage through precision irrigation techniques, potentially reducing water consumption by up to 30% in water-intensive farming.

World Bank

AI Concerns

Community Justice

Data centers follow the same model as other harmful industries—locating in Black, Brown, Indigenous, and working-class communities under the guise of "development," while externalizing environmental and health costs.

Business Insider

Nonprofits and legal organizations are increasingly turning to AI-powered tools to amplify their reach. These tools provide rapid translation, intake triage, and initial screening for communities facing legal, literacy or language challenges.

Financial Times

AI Concerns

Devaluation of Human Creativity

AI-generated art can replicate human styles without consent, leading to job displacement and ethical concerns. A report published in January 2024 predicted that generative AI could disrupt over 200,000 entertainment industry jobs in the United States by 2026.

The Guardian

AI can enhance artists' productivity by automating repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus more on creative aspects. For instance, a survey found that 65% of artists have used AI to expand on their ideas or find new ones.

Academy of Animated Art

AI Concerns

Privacy, Intellectual Property and Security

AI users can expose sensitive organizational data. In a 2024 survey, 98% of organizations say at least one third-party vendor has suffered a data breach, highlighting the extensive vulnerabilities within partners and networks.

Secure Frame

AI can enhance organizational privacy by efficiently detecting and mitigating data breaches. Organizations that extensively implemented security AI experienced an average cost savings of $2.22 million per breach compared to those without such measures.

IBM

AI Concerns

Bias

Research shows that facial recognition AI systems exhibit racial bias, with error rates up to 35% higher for darker-skinned individuals compared to lighter-skinned ones, leading to wrongful arrests and systemic discrimination.

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Unlike humans, AI can be trained on diverse datasets and regularly audited to minimize unconscious biases that often influence human decision-making. Studies show that well-designed AI hiring tools can improve diversity by up to 25%, reducing human bias in resume screening and interview selection.

McKinsey Global Institute

Practicing Ethical AI

"Whether AI will help us reach our aspirations or reinforce the unjust inequalities is ultimately up to us."

Joy Buolamwini

Poll 2: Does Your Nonprofit Have a Generative AI Policy?

1. Yes!
2. I don't know
3. No, but we are working on one
4. No, and I don't think we'll create one any time soon
5. Not applicable/other

What is Ethical AI?

Ethical AI

Reduces Bias

AI often reflects the biases in its training data, leading to inaccurate or harmful outputs.

Protects Privacy

Open tools (e.g., ChatGPT) may store user inputs for algorithm training, risking data exposure. Closed tools (custom or proprietary systems) offer better control but require investment.

Limits Inaccuracy

AI tools can generate bad answers based on incomplete or incorrect data.

Centers on Human Value

Generative AI can devalue communities, incorporate stolen content and artwork, and displace talents that are better left to human professionals.

Ethical AI is the responsible development and use of AI technologies that prioritize fairness, justice, transparency, accountability and privacy while mitigating risks of bias and harm.

Five Questions to Guide AI Usage

Who is impacted if we use this tool?

- Are trained professionals—like voice actors, writers, or designers—losing opportunities?
- Can the tool make jobs more creative, not just more efficient?
- Could it displace community-rooted creative labor or storytelling?
- Who gains power or time—and who loses income, autonomy, or voice?

Five Questions to Guide AI Usage

Who is left out if we use this tool?

- What biases are baked into the algorithms—and who's excluded by default?
- Do accessibility tools reflect the full range of disability experiences?
- Are underserved groups part of the design or feedback process?
- Could this tool bridge access gaps—or widen them?

Five Questions to Guide AI Usage

How does this tool help us pursue our mission?

- Does it help us spot trends, save time, or refocus on impact?
- Could it disconnect us from stakeholders or relational work?
- Are we using AI to expand reach—or to replace human connection?
- Does it uplift our mission—or quietly shift our priorities?

Five Questions to Guide AI Usage

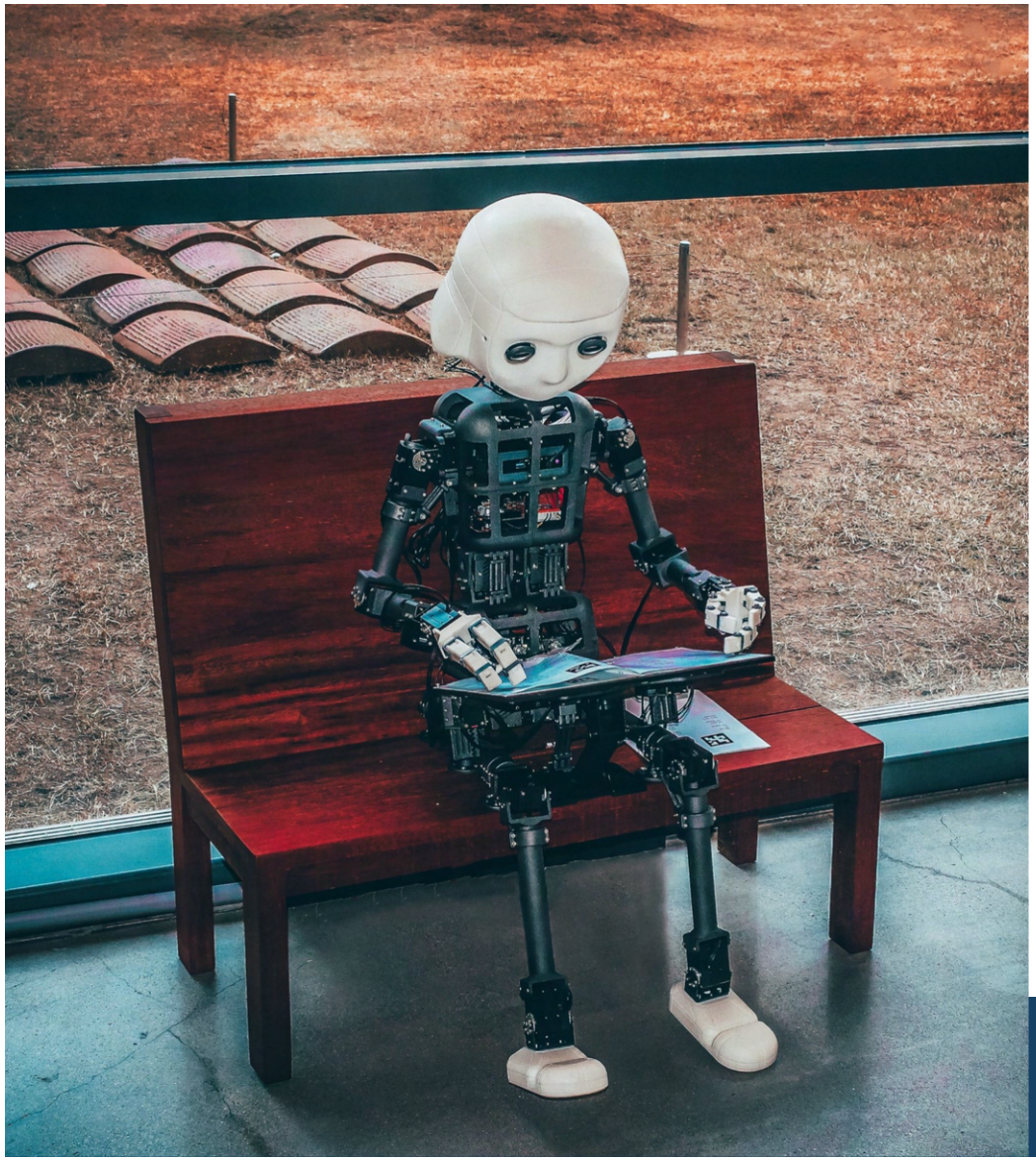
What do employees need to maximize tool use?

- Do we have a clear, evolving AI policy—and shared expectations?
- Is training available and accessible to all staff, not just tech-confident users?
- Are there systems for reporting concerns or sharing successes?
- Do staff know what to do when new tools emerge?

Five Questions to Guide AI Usage

What are the ultimate risks and harms?

- How is our data handled—and by whom?
- Are bias and accuracy being regularly assessed?
- Are there copyright or consent concerns with training data?
- Are we relying on tech that harms communities (e.g., exploitative data centers)?
- Does it align with our values—or undermine them?



Putting AI to Work for You

Applying AI for Good

Prioritize Underserved Communities

- Ethical AI implementation can help bridge the gap for underrepresented populations, ensuring that AI tools and technologies are accessible and beneficial to all.
- Leaders can play a crucial role in advocating for AI applications that lower barriers, protect community autonomy and ensure benefits flow to those historically excluded from tech-driven systems.

Ethical AI in Practice

Make Work More Rewarding

Automate Repetitive Tasks

Streamline repetitive tasks like summaries or lists—but leave decisions and voice to people.

Create "Personal Assistants"

Create systems that help (not replace) teams in scheduling, organizing and staying focused.

Build Skills

Use AI to explain new concepts and processes at your own pace.

Reclaim Time for Mission Work

Free up capacity for relationship-building, storytelling and community engagement.

Ethical AI in Practice

Increase Impact

Create Faster Communication

Quickly create outlines for blogs, e-newsletters and social media campaigns.

Communicate in a Crisis

Address emerging crises quickly with sample checklists, timelines and talking points.

Incorporate Research

Drive strategies by finding and using the latest research from the field.

Ethical AI in Practice

General Guidelines

Verify names, numbers, quotes, and dates

Ensure the accuracy of all factual information presented in the content.

Use neutral, inclusive language

Avoid bias and promote diversity and inclusion in the language used.

Choose the smallest capable model

Utilize the most efficient and lightweight model for the task at hand.

Keep records of prompts and decisions

Maintain a log of the prompts used and the final decisions made to ensure transparency and efficiency.

Provide citations for all research

Clearly document the sources of information to build trust and credibility.

Ethical AI in Practice

Creating Good Prompts

Context Kit

Org + 10-word mission • audience and tone • call to action and deadline • 3–5 facts with dates/sources • location and partners • consent/privacy limits • brand do/don't words

Structure

Ask for bullets or a table; specify length

Examples

Upload 1-2 similar past pieces by the same author to help guide tone and structure.

Accuracy

Ask for citations, show math, name one uncertainty, no guessing

Ethical AI in Practice

Models At-A-Glance (free versions)

Claude: Safest for sensitive work

Claude is the most conservative and risk-averse model, making it suitable for tasks that require a high level of reliability and trustworthiness.

ChatGPT: Versatile and user-friendly

ChatGPT is a highly flexible model that can handle a wide range of tasks, but it may produce unreliable or factually incorrect information.

MS Copilot: Fast in Office/coding

Copilot is optimized for productivity in common Office 365tasks and programming, but it requires careful review for potential bugs. Difficulty in replicating results.

Perplexity: Answers with links

Perplexity provides responses with relevant links, but it is essential to verify the facts and rights associated with the information provided.

Gemini: Powerful with controls

Gemini is a highly capable model, but it frequently produces hallucinated content, so it requires close monitoring and control.

Change Agent: Nonprofit values and private

Change Agent is aligned with nonprofit values and has a narrower scope, making it suitable for specific use cases.

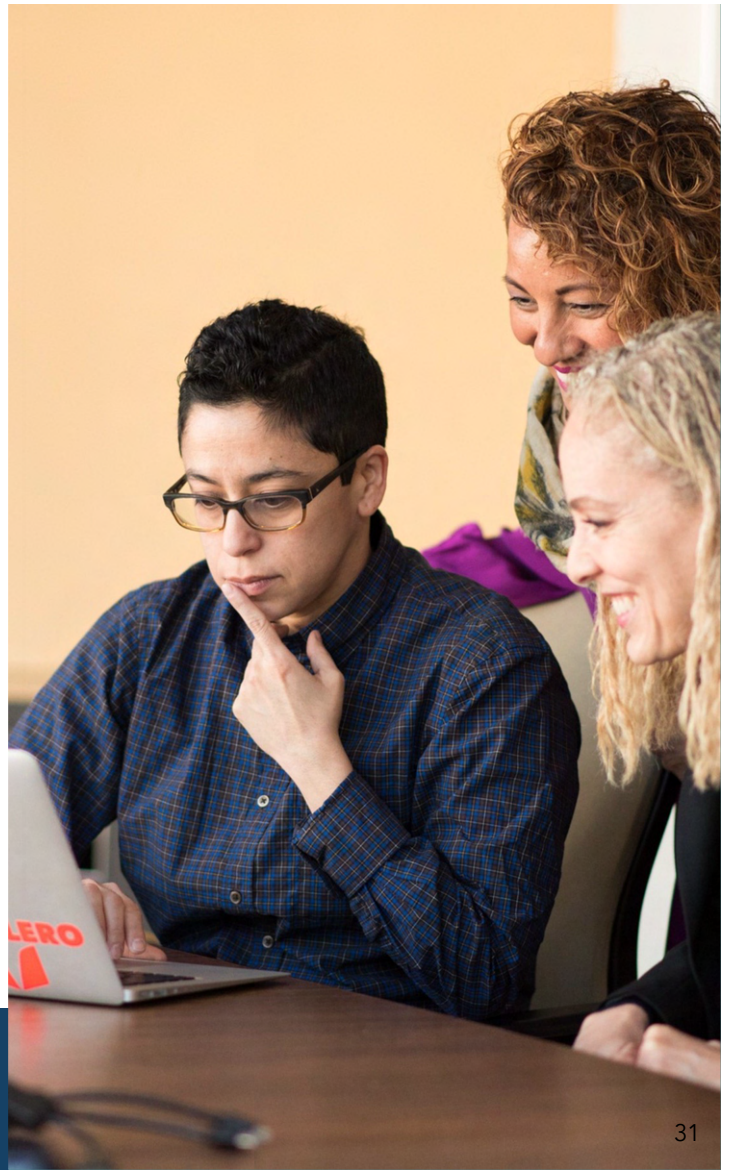
Final Thoughts

Start small with one use case to build comfort among staff.

Remember AI is an assistant, not an author.

Beyond your policy, create simple guardrails that offer accessible guidance.

Encourage staff experimentation and sharing.



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Questions?

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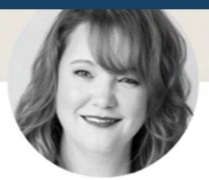

Brenda K. Foster, MPA
Cause Communicator, PR and Behavior Change Strategist, PRSA-NCC Hall of Fame...

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Thank You

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