Artificial Intelligence and Grant Makers

What is “Artificial Intelligence”?

According to AI (Google) ***“Artificial intelligence (AI) is a set of technologies that allow machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. AI systems use algorithms, data, and computational power to simulate human intelligence”.***

The use of AI is widespread and unstoppable, it touches all parts of life and has been doing so steadily for years: think about ways in which we all currently use AI in everyday life:

- Spellchecker
- Word counts
- Satellite navigation
- Alexa/Siri
- Predictive text
- Streaming services - algorithms predicting what you like to watch and listen to
- Facial recognition
- Etc etc

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Chat GPT etc

Now “Large Language Models” e.g ChatGPT Claude, Copilot, Gemini are developing rapidly.

“A large language model (LLM) is a type of machine learning model designed for natural language processing tasks such as language generation. LLMs are language models with many parameters and are trained with self-supervised learning on a vast amount of text.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Large_language_model

AI Tools: Chat GPT etc

There are a range of tools which help you use AI to generate content for Grant Applications e.g.

- Local Giving AI https://localgiving.org/do-along-quicker-and-more-effective-grant-applications-with-our-ai-assistant
- https://www.charityexcellence.co.uk/free-charity-ai-bid-writing/
- https://www.plinth.org.uk/features/ai-grant-writer
- Use Chat GPT https://openai.com/chatgpt/
- Create and develop images: https://docs.midjourney.com/hc/en-us

Many funders have yet to develop a policy on the use of AI, although it is a current issue and some funders use AI themselves e.g. to help develop programmes, do grant assessments, manage evaluation and monitoring etc.

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AI: Opportunities

Opportunities for Funders

Example 1: Grant Management AI-powered tools like Fluxx or OpenGrants **streamline application reviews** by analysing language patterns, applicant history, and funding outcomes.

Example 2: **Impact Measurement AI analyses trends in funded projects**, e.g. how food bank usage correlates with economic changes.

Example 3: **Community Needs Assessment Tools** like predictive modelling identify areas most in need of support, such as mapping social inequality or emerging health trends.

Example 4: Engaging Donors AI chatbots and personalised messaging **drive donor retention and engagement**, tailoring outreach based on past giving patterns.

Example 5: AI can help **policy development** and can anaylse policies from grant applicants to see if they meet standards and criteria.

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AI Threats

- AI tools are only as good as the data they have been exposed to. At the time of writing, ChatGPT is up to date with web data added up to end of 2024.

- Be careful with personal or sensitive data. Although most tools commit not to sharing information, the information you upload onto the internet could be used by AI. Some tools contain security settings which can be switched on and off.

- AI tools can make mistakes and provide incorrect or out-of-date responses (known as hallucination) based on what they find out on the internet.

- As with humans, there can be biases which can arise from the underlying information or data being biased.

- The digitally excluded and those who face barriers to digital engagement could be further disadvantaged by AI

- "In a relatively short period of time it is possible that AI could drive a far greater number of applications, and higher-quality applications, to roughly the same number of grant makers with the same total amount of grant funding available."

- It is not a good idea for us to become over reliant on AI, as creativity could be lost or diminished.

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Pros and Cons for Grant Applicants

Pros

- AI helps improve the comprehension and focus of text.
- The use of AI is good for applicants for whom English is not their first language.
- AI might be of great help to people with barriers such as dyslexia or if applicants are otherwise neurodivergent.
- Funders might encourage use of technology to improve application standards.
- AI might lead to innovative ways of tackling issues.

Cons

- Funders might worry that the use of AI could lead to generic or impersonal applications, lacking the unique voice and passion of the applicant.
- Funders might be concerned that applications will lack authenticity and may misrepresent what the applicant actually wants to do if an AI generates substantial parts of the application without the applicant's direct input and oversight.
- Applicants might lose their reason for applying and have less control over what they want to say

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Key Considerations

How could AI improve how we fund and support voluntary organisations?

How do funders support applicants to make the best use of the opportunities that AI potentially offers?

What challenges could arise and how can we address them?

How do we keep it ethical and human led?

How do we recognise and mitigate against the threats and risks of using AI?

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“The rise of artificial general intelligence (AGI) — an artificial intelligence (AI) system with superhuman intelligence that can perform well at various tasks — is a matter of when, not if, according to a new analysis of thousands of expert opinions.....

Based on an averaging of the data, there's a 50% probability that we would achieve human-level intelligence in machines at some point between 2040 and 2061....

Some in the field, like Dario Amodei, AI researcher and CEO of AI company Anthropic, believe it may even happen as soon as 2026.....”

https://www.livescience.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/agi-could-now-arrive-as-early-as-2026-but-not-all-scientists-agree

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Reflections

What are the key takeaways for you?
What are the next steps and actions that you might need to take?

Further reading:

Why AI matters for fundraising:
https://fundraising.co.uk/2023/03/15/ai-for-fundraising-why-chatgpt-matters-to-fundraisers/

https://fundraising.co.uk/2023/03/31/questions-on-ais-implications-for-fundraising/

Will AI achieve human type intelligence?
https://www.newscientist.com/article/2462000-openais-o3-model-aced-a-test-of-ai-reasoning-but-its-still-not-agi/

Charity AI Task Force
https://www.wearecast.org.uk/our-work/how-we-work-with-funders-and-partners/charity-ai-task-force/

National Lottery AI Principles
https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/AI-principles.pdf

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