



COMPLETE GUIDE TO

# AI Adoption *for Nonprofits*

onecause®

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# Complete Guide to AI Adoption for Nonprofits

Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to be a trending topic for nonprofits across the country, generating lots of buzz – and confusion.

The truth of the matter is AI isn't just a buzzword – it's a valuable tool that can help nonprofits raise more for their mission. According to the [2024 Fundraising Outlook Report](#), 41% of nonprofits surveyed agreed that AI would greatly benefit nonprofits, and 36% agreed that AI would directly impact their fundraising strategies.

Yet a very small number of nonprofits have made efforts to adopt AI. According to [DonorSearch](#), fewer than 30% of nonprofits have started using AI, citing fear of the unknown as one of the most common hesitations. Additionally, some nonprofits may not feel equipped to use AI, as data from the 2024 Fundraising Outlook Report shows that 43% of nonprofits expressed uncertainty about AI implementation.

We're here to say there's no reason to be afraid of AI! This guide will pull back the curtain to what AI is, steps to safe and ethical adoption, and tips on using it in your day-to-day work to raise more for your mission. Let's dive in!



# What is Machine Learning?

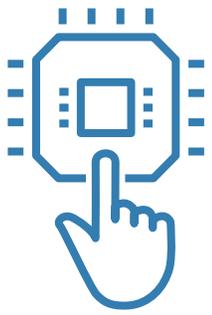
In the modern world, artificial intelligence touches every part of our lives, not just through our computers. You're probably already using AI in your life right now! Things such as predictive text, excel sheet prompts, and text-to-read apps are all types of artificial intelligence that are designed to make our lives easier.



AI is the technology that enables digital devices to learn, read, write, create, and analyze.

Machine learning is just another type of artificial intelligence, focused on building patterns from the data you give it. Think about your social media feed or the shows Netflix suggests to you. This is a type of predictive machine learning, as it gets to know your patterns and interests and uses this knowledge to predict what you'll enjoy next.

AI creates algorithms based on the data provided and can execute manual tasks at scale to accomplish tedious tasks quickly and efficiently. It improves its performance over time and adapts to new scenarios to complete tasks in record time.



# How Does Artificial Intelligence Work for Nonprofits?

A comprehensive AI tool needs two major things: data and a strong algorithm. Data is the information you feed it, and the algorithm is what operates on that data. Think of it as a feedback loop. The more information you give it, the stronger output it can create.

For the nonprofit industry, the start of this feedback loop is your fundraising data. After all, it is the driving force behind all your crucial decisions regarding your events and campaigns! With every donation form, social media sign up, and payment processor, you are collecting data that can be used to inform a future fundraiser. Why not leverage AI to help?

While collecting and organizing data is an excellent use of AI, some nonprofits are already using it to do so much more, such as:

- Writing personalized thank you notes after donation events
- Crafting newsletters for various audiences
- Organizing grant proposals
- Writing press releases
- Scheduling social media posts
- And more!

However, even once you begin tapping into AI tools, stay mindful of the areas of your organization that AI touches. AI is best used when it's helping with day-to-day tasks, not when it's replacing a human. Nonprofits operating under that mindset have already caused controversy.



**In 2022**, the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) released an AI chatbot named Tessa to replace its popular telephone hotline, where people experiencing eating disorders would turn to find health and support. The organization failed to supervise or control the chatbot, which began to share harmful advice with callers. This lack of training and supervision of the chatbot led to consequences for both the organization and those who used their service.



This is why taking the time to train your AI tools on your organization's mission and maintaining a human element is crucial. Had Tessa been properly trained and supervised, any negative consequences would have been caught ahead of time. Before you consider bringing AI to your organization, you should first take the proper adoption and training into account to ensure it runs properly.



# Adopting AI Into Your Nonprofit

Training your AI should be similar to how train a newly hired intern. They have all the right skills, now they just need to get to know your organization! Letting AI get to know you is just as important as learning how to work with it. Once it understands your mission and fundraising goals, it can begin organizing data, drafting campaigns, and creating content.

Below are a few ways you can train your AI on your nonprofit's mission and goals:

- **Feed AI your organization's annual report.** This will teach the AI about your fundraising goals, your annual appeals, and when your donors are more likely to give based on how much they gave in the past year. For even more accuracy, provide the past few years of reports as well so it gains a broader scope.
- **Utilize your past appeal letters** to let the AI learn your brand's tone. Appeal letters are an excellent way for AI to get to know your organization's mission and what goals you are trying to achieve.
- **Feed the AI past newsletters or email campaigns** to give it an example of your short-form content. This will help it gain an understanding of how it can connect to your donors using a more casual mindset.



Remember to test, test, test your AI before you use it for any donor-facing tasks! Try asking it to write an email that's optimized for open rates and potential giving. Check the output for your organization's tone, brand voice, and of course, a worthy donation ask. If it sounds off, test it again! It will likely take a few tries before your AI nails the right tone.

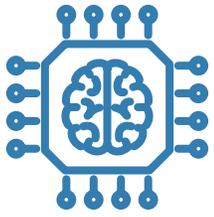
If you're not ready for AI to start creating content for you, that's okay too. There are plenty of ways AI can be used outside of content creation. Take a look at these examples for some inspiration on how AI can assist outside of content creation:

- Organize thoughts and brainstorm ideas for your next fundraising event.
- Create an outline for your annual appeal letter.
- Write a first draft of a campaign email that will be edited by a human.
- Suggest ways to optimize an already-written grant proposal.
- Fully integrating AI into the workplace will likely take years, but the process of saving your team time and assisting in gathering data for more informed campaign decisions can start now.



**Collecting the information** for a grant and drafting the proposal takes time and effort. Editing the proposal itself can be daunting. Enter AI. According to Stanford Social Inno, a grant writer for a human services agency shared that she used Chat GPT to edit three different grant proposals to help her catch any mistakes. It worked – all three grants got funded!





# AI and Ethics: How to Adopt with Intentions

As we enter this era of AI usage, learning how to navigate safe adoption is key. Before you consider getting started with AI, your organization needs to understand what key element you're trying to get out of it. Think about the areas in your team that need the most help. Are you trying to...

- Save your team time?
- Stay more organized?
- Create more effective fundraising campaigns?

No two nonprofit missions are the same, so make sure to take the time to decide what your team needs. Once you identify where AI can offer value, you can begin creating your **data usage policy**.

A data usage policy is a legal description of how you plan to collect, retain, and share donor information with AI. Many nonprofits are unsure of what information to share with AI, so as a good rule of thumb, consider anything you post to the internet to be your guidelines. If you aren't sharing your donor's phone numbers or emails on your website, you shouldn't give AI that information!

Take the OneCause Auction AI™ software as an example of how to structure your relationship with AI. Auction AI™ uses predictive text for auction lot descriptions and recommending lots, so feeding the program donor or customer information is unnecessary.

In the building and training of this AI model, OneCause engineers continuously scrubbed any data that could be identifiable information to ensure the safety of those using it. The AI now only understands auction-focused keywords and clicks, which ensures that OneCause customer information is secured.

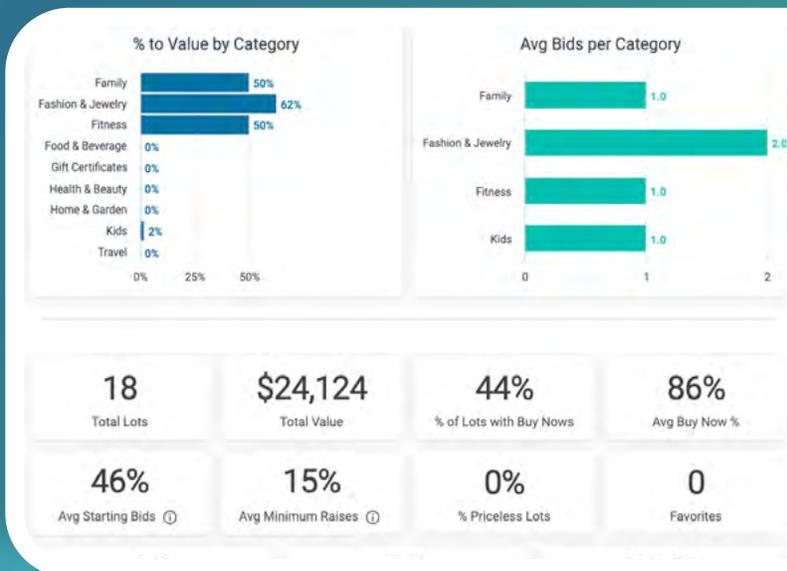
Consult your data usage policy before implementing AI and create guardrails to protect your donor data. A key place to start is by researching the Fundraising.AI framework and seeing what your nonprofit can apply from its guidelines.

Above all else, remember that maintaining your donors' trust is vital. There's a reason it's one of the top motivators for giving according to the [2023 Giving Experience Study](#), ranked alongside mission and ease. Your donors trust you to handle their information with care. Honoring that as you begin to work with AI will continue to help your organization build long lasting donor relationships!

## Want to get more out of your fundraising data?

The OneCause Fundraising Platform helps centralize your fundraising analytics so you can make more informed decisions about your next event or campaign.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



# Steps to Adopting AI Responsibly

## ❑ Step 1

Think through potential rewards and risks before diving in.

## ❑ Step 2

Address any anxieties or fears surrounding AI with your own staff. Be open about how you are going to use it day to day and how it can save time.

## ❑ Step 3

Be responsible in your data adaptation. Create an AI usage policy and stick to it.

## ❑ Step 4

Plan on risks and biases and adapt to them. Test your AI thoroughly before you start using it on any donor-facing documents.

## ❑ Step 5

Identify where AI can be used to save time vs where you want to keep the human element of your organization.

## ❑ Step 6

Continue to test and adjust, even after it's launched. Keep it up-to-date with your brand and your organization's initiatives.



# Popular AI Tools for Nonprofits

Now that we've discussed how to adopt AI into your organization's day-to-day, let's turn to what tools will best serve you. When every minute counts toward powering your mission, time-saving AI tools shouldn't be ignored.

The following is a collection of AI tools that can be used to save you time:

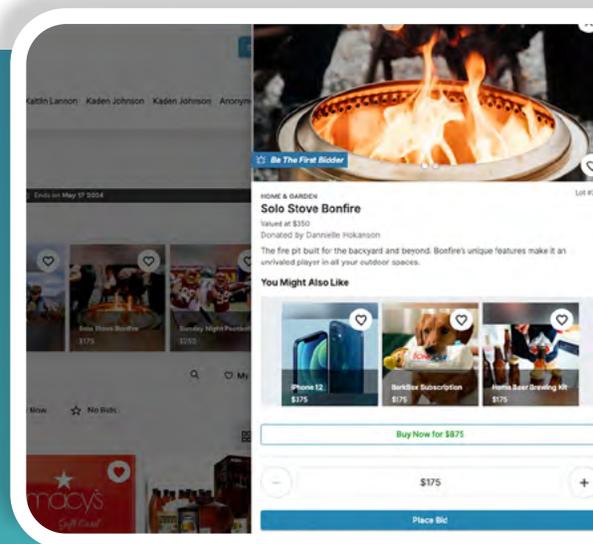
- **Chat GPT** - Leading the pack as one of the most popular generative AI tools, Chat GPT can help you with a wide variety of tasks. It is strongest with assisting both in content creation and campaign brainstorming.
- **Grammarly** - Who wouldn't want a professional editor to review their writing? Grammarly does just that; it edits your grammar, spelling, and helps you construct stronger sentences.
- **Canva** - A picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes the right picture is hard to find. By using Canva's AI image generator, you can have AI create the perfect image for you to use in your marketing materials.
- **Frase** - If you want to incorporate some keywords into your donation pages to make sure they're seen by a wider audience, Frase can help. This tool can create search engine optimized (SEO) blog post outlines, suggest keywords, and optimize your existing content for SEO.
- **Gamma** - Prepping for your next board presentation or annual report presentation? Try out Gamma, a tool that uses AI to create wow-worthy presentation decks. Just write away and let it handle the formatting and design.

- **Generative Fill** - Have you ever captured the perfect picture at your fundraising event, but noticed a thumb in the frame? Generative Fill in Photoshop is a photo editing tool that helps add, remove, or create image elements within Photoshop so you get a perfect shot with every picture.
- **Stocking.AI** - The right branding can catch a donor's attention, even down to engaging logos and design elements. This tool can help you generate logos, art, and illustrations for your next campaign or themed event.
- **Krisp** - Tired of taking notes during your board meetings? Consider using Krisp, an AI-powered meeting assistant tool that will help take notes and summarize action items and key points of discussion.
- **OwlyWriter** - With many fundraising initiatives happening at once, it can be difficult to find time for social media. OwlyWriter is an AI tool specifically used to write social media posts to engage with your audience or generate ideas to keep your feed looking fresh.
- **OneCause** - When you're hosting an auction, writing engaging and exciting item descriptions can be time-consuming. Auction AI™ from OneCause uses generative text to craft engaging item descriptions, saving your organization up to 8 hours of prep time. Additionally, by analyzing bidding patterns, it can present AI-driven item recommendations for your auction participants to bid on.

## Want to see Auction AI™ in action?

Talk to a OneCause fundraising expert about how you can save time during your next auction.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)





# AI Uses for Nonprofits

Let's look at the valuable ways AI can help your nonprofit build better tomorrows.

**Personalization At Scale** - Every donor deserves to feel valued, and there's no better way to show that appreciation than by personalizing your messaging. While your team may not be able to personally address every donor on your own, AI allows for mass customization of communications. By utilizing AI and personalizing messages at scale, every donor feels individually valued and is more likely to continue to donate.

**Predictive Data Insights** - Take the guesswork out of timing your campaigns by utilizing AI insights. AI can predict donor behavior and preferences through your donor data, letting you make more effective and timely engagement strategies. For example, if your audience tends to give more during a back-to-school campaign, time an appeal based on the specific dates/times when donor interest is at a high. You may be surprised how many donations you can get if you strike when the iron is hot!

**Enhanced Donor Understanding** - AI-driven data analysis provides deeper insights into donor motivations and engagement patterns. Do your donors give more online during the winter, but donate more in-person in the summer? Use AI insights to create a strong and well-rounded fundraising calendar for effective year-round campaigns.

**Engage In Social Media** – Your social media page may be the first place a potential donor learns about your mission. Posting on social media consistently can be a challenge. With AI, your organization can quickly generate and schedule exciting and relevant content to keep your supporters engaged in your efforts.

**Effective Email Campaigns** – Tailoring your emails to specific audiences can help not only spread awareness of your mission but can tailor your outreach to specific audiences. For example, an appeal to a one-time donor may read differently than one to a monthly donor. AI can remove the burden of writing multiple email campaigns by creating personalized email content for specific audiences – helping to save you time and boost engagement.

**Auction AI** – After hours and hours of auction preparation, it can be difficult to find the brainpower to write engaging and dynamic lot descriptions. OneCause Auction AI consists of two game-changing pieces of functionality:

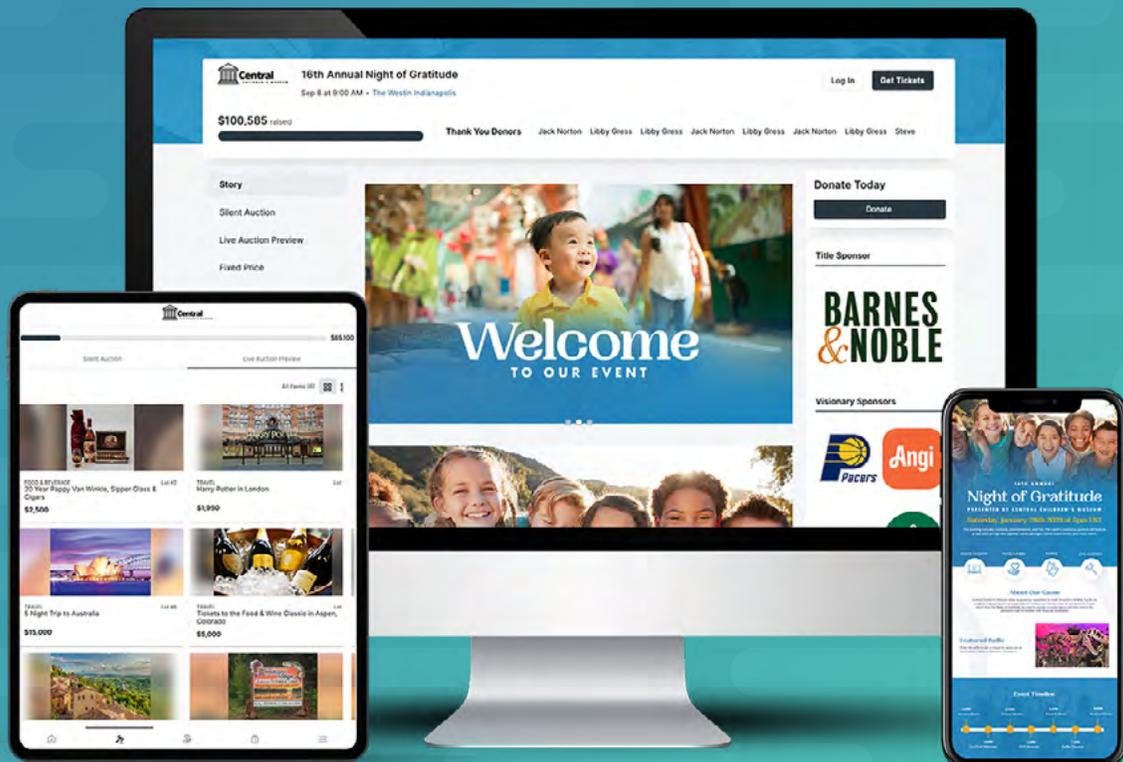
- **Auction Item Description Generator** – Leverages generative AI techniques to craft compelling and enticing item descriptions, which helps engage guests, increase bids, and save you time.
- **Item Recommendations** – Built with data from over 40,000 auctions and 4 million auction items, the Item Recommendation feature presents guests with AI-driven item recommendations, ultimately helping nonprofits drive more revenue.

Using AI can amplify your fundraising efforts while minimizing your team's administrative burden, maximizing your overall impact!

# Conclusion

It's time to step forward with confidence knowing AI can help your nonprofit engage with donors on a whole new level and raise more funds for your cause.

**OneCause provides powerful fundraising solutions to nonprofit organizations.** As a first-to-market innovation in nonprofit software, OneCause continues to move the needle forward in fundraising technology. Take a tour of the platform to see how OneCause can help you leverage technology to build better tomorrows.



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